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# Lenten Thoughts ;

BEING A

SERIES OF BRIEF MEDITATIONS  
ON THE  
COLLECTS, EPISTLES AND GOSPELS

FOR THE

Season of Lent.

"REND your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God : for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."—JOEL 2 : 13.

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THOMAS WHITTAKER,  
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PREFACE.

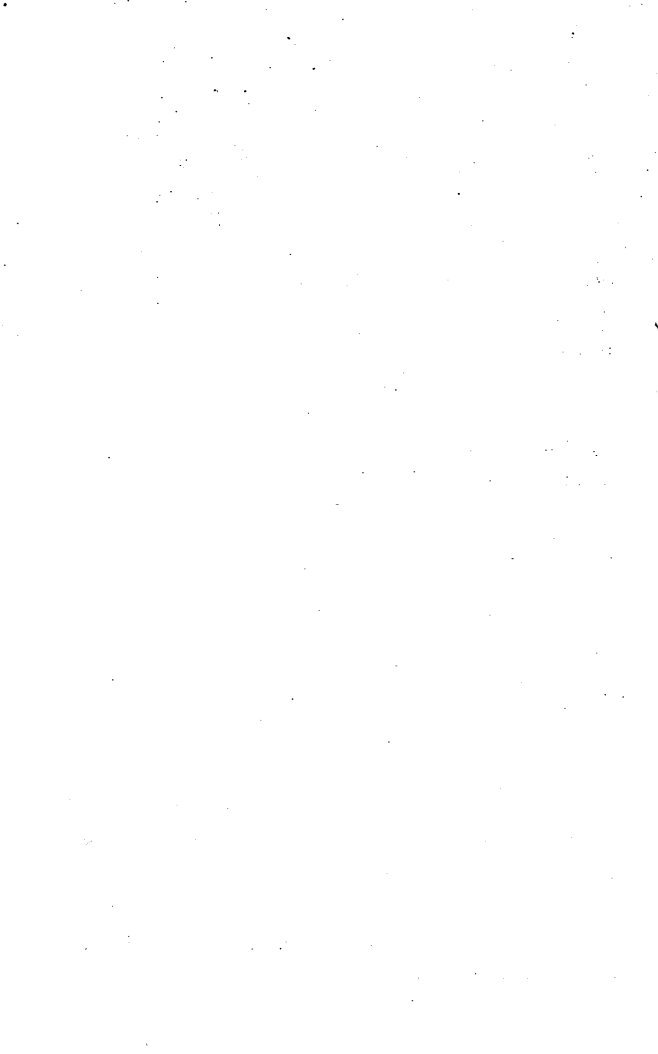
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THE title-page of this little book fully explains its object. It comes before the Church with no pretensions to literary merit, but merely to supply, in some humble way, a want which the writer has for years personally experienced.

*Gifted* minds have given us their thoughts on the Lenten Fast, and their works have informed the understanding and touched the hearts of many. But there still remains a class whose needs do not appear to have been fully met—the *young*, the *inexperienced*, the *busy* Christian—who, while desiring the profitable improvement of this season, has neither time nor ability for any helps lengthy and profound.


That Lent is not observed as it ought to be, or as it was designed to be, must be apparent to the least observant mind; and, therefore, it is hoped that a new attempt to make it more productive of spiritual blessing will not be deemed impertinent or useless.

May He who has inspired the desire thus to aid His “little ones,” be graciously pleased to accept and bless this effort.



## INTRODUCTION.

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N offering a work of this character to the reader, it may not be deemed amiss to make a few remarks concerning the *season* itself, and the *manner* and *object* of its observance.

LENT is derived from an old Saxon word, meaning *to lengthen*, in allusion to the *lengthening* of the days in spring, at which time this fast occurs. Lent continues from Ash-Wednesday to Easter, a period of forty days, when we exclude Sundays, which are never *fast-days*.

This season of humiliation has been observed by the Church from a very early period, some writers tracing it back even to the first century. But the time of its duration has varied very much. At first it appears to have been only *forty hours* in length; afterward thirty-six days; until finally, about the eighth century, it was extended to forty days, in imi-



tation of the fasts of Moses, Elias, and our Blessed Lord.

As the *time* of its observance has varied in different ages of the Church, so also has the *manner* of it. At first it was customary among those who kept the fast with strictness to abstain from food until the evening. They then partook of supper, indifferent as to the nature of the food, only so that it was received with sobriety and moderation. "Lent was thought the proper time for exercising more abundantly every species of charity; thus, what they spared of their own bodies by abridging them of a meal, was usually given to the poor. They employed their vacant hours in visiting the sick and those that were in prison, in entertaining strangers, and reconciling differences. The imperial laws forbade all prosecution of men in criminal actions, that might bring them to corporal punishment and torture during the whole season. This was a time of more than ordinary strictness and devotion; and therefore, in many churches they had religious assemblies for prayer and preaching every day. All public games and stage-plays were prohibited at this season, and also the celebration of all festivals, birthdays, and marriages."

The *object* of the Church in appointing the Lenten Fast is evidently to prepare our minds and hearts for the proper contemplation of the *passion* and *death* of

our Blessed Lord. We need the discipline of soul which this season is designed to afford. We need to withdraw from the world for a time, and fix our attention on heavenly things, that our minds may be brought into a suitable frame to contemplate that event which filled adoring archangels with wonder, and caused hell to tremble to its lowest depths.

There is no season in the Church more precious to the sincere believer than Lent. Its coming is looked forward to with interest ; its departure is accompanied with a feeling of sadness, as when we bid farewell to a tried and trusted friend. The voice of the Church in all ages has spoken its worth. She calls upon her children by her frequent services, her solemn teachings, to draw nearer to their God. And when the season has passed, the Christian who has availed himself of its advantages feels that he has been "strengthened with might" by the power of the Holy Ghost for his future conflicts "against sin, the world, and the devil."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## ASH-WEDNESDAY.

MORNING.

"We worthily lamenting our sins."—*Collect.*



THE voice of the Church calls us to descend this morning with our Blessed Lord into the valley of humiliation. Let us now turn aside from the world's broad ways, forsaking its pomp, its glitter and show, and avoiding as far as possible, consistently with the calls of duty, even a multiplicity of business cares, that we may tread with Him the narrow paths of self-denial which the worldling scorns. Let us enter into the closet of our hearts, locking the door against the troop of worldly thoughts that knock for entrance, and sit down to commune with Our Guest. We will bid Him welcome. And as the wise merchant gathers his books, and with scrutinizing care examines his accounts, to see how he stands before the world; so will we, aided by the Holy Spirit, seek now to examine the records of our lives, and see how they appear in the sight of a God "that will by no means clear the guilty."

As we commence the investigation, what a black catalogue meets the eye! Sins of commission and omission — of thought, word, and deed—broken resolutions and forgotten vows, until we are ready

to exclaim, "My iniquities are gone over my head ; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me." Shall we close the record and turn from it in horror, crying, "Wo is me ! for I am undone" ? No, beloved, let us rather seek to know the worst ; for when we have searched to the very end, as we think, of the dark list, we have gained but a faint conception of the depravity of our corrupt hearts. He only who possesses infinite purity is able truly to measure the depths of man's transgression.

Let us then humble ourselves before God on account of our sins. Let us fall before the mercy-seat and cry, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness : according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions : and my sin is ever before me." And the gracious promise shall speak peace to our hearts, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy."

"Father, a weary heart

Has come to Thee for peace ;

The world has not the healing art

To bid its trouble cease.

"It brings before Thy throne

Its weight of woe and care ;

Do Thou accept its pleading tone,

The contrite sinner's prayer."

• He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.

## ASH-WEDNESDAY.

NOON.

“ Who turn to Thee with weeping, fasting, and prayer.”

*Collect.*



THE spring must find an outlet; the living seed must germinate and bud. And thus, if our hearts are truly penitent on account of sin, and we are “worthily lamenting it,” there will be some outward manifestation of our sorrow. Weeping and fasting are the natural demonstrations of intense grief. Can you recall the time when a beloved form was snatched from your side—when the vacant chair was no longer filled, and you listened for the familiar step in vain? Were not your eyes then “fountains of tears”? and did you not loathe your dainty food? And if now your heart grieves over its sins; if the sight of Jesus, crucified for you, awakens its deepest feelings of penitence; if the thought, “My sins gave sharpness to the nail, and pointed every thorn,” affects you in any just degree, will not the eye, under the influence of such emotions, glisten with the tear of sensibility? Will not the soul shrink from its accustomed luxuries, and turn in disgust from all its pomp and pride? And will not the spirit, “bowed down beneath a load of guilt,” find its only relief in “strong crying and tears”?

We have sinned against light and against love. The law of God, written in characters clear as a sunbeam, though it commended itself to our reason and our conscience, has been times without number deliberately made light of; while the love of God, which surrounded our whole lives with a halo of blessing, has, alas! been too often abused into a very excuse for sin.

Let us then humbly take the only position which becomes a sinner—at the foot of the Cross. Let us gaze upward through our tears upon that suffering form “wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.” Let us bow down before Him who once hung there in agony and blood, and cry, “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, because we have sinned against Thee.”

“Lo, with deep contrition turning,  
Humbly at Thy feet we bend;  
Hear us, fasting, praying, mourning;  
Hear us, spare us, and defend.

“Though our sins our hearts confounding,  
Long and loud for vengeance call;  
Thou hast mercy more abounding—  
Jesus’ blood can cleanse them all.”

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## ASH-WEDNESDAY.

### EVENING.

“Thou sparest when we deserve punishment, and in Thy wrath thinkest upon mercy.”—*Collect.*

**D**ID you ever think *why* God spares the guilty? How He can consistently with His holiness, justice, and truth, “pass over” the sinner? The law of God, eternal and unchanging even as Jehovah himself, denounces “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.” “The soul that sinneth, it shall die,” is its terrible message. How then God can be just and yet justify the ungodly, is a question of the most intense interest to every one who feels within his own heart the upbraidings of a guilty conscience.

But the answer! oh! how it calms the troubled spirit, and heals the broken heart. It is because One, the Son of His love, was “wounded for our transgressions.” When the law raised its avenging arm to strike, and our guilty souls were trembling over the abyss of hell, Jesus stepped between, and received in His own person the punishment which our sins had incurred. He is our “Days-man.” He it is who, laying His hand upon the head of the believing penitent, says, Father, he

is mine. My blood is on him. My sufferings have redeemed him. My death has released him from the curse of Thy violated law. And the Father, who spared not His own Son, well pleased accepts the ransom, and welcomes to His heart the prodigal who returns to Him clothed in a Saviour's righteousness.

Reader, can you thus plead the efficacy of a Saviour's blood? Have you such an interest in His death, that when the angel of wrath passes on to destroy, he will see the blood sprinkled upon your soul and "pass over"? Thus only can God's "mercy and truth meet together." Thus only can God be just and yet justify the sinner. Oh! if you have any doubts of your acceptance with Him, let not this Ash-Wednesday close, until by application to the blood of Jesus, your heart is "sprinkled from an evil conscience."

Blessed is that soul whom God, for Christ's sake, spares from "the bitter pains of eternal death." That blessing is graciously offered to "whomsoever will." Shall it be yours?

"Blessed be God, our God!

Who gave for us His well-beloved Son—

His gift of gifts, all other gifts in one.

Blessed be God, our God!

"He spared not His Son!

'Tis this that silences each rising fear—

'Tis this that bids the hard thought disappear—

He spared not His Son!"



“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## THURSDAY MORNING.

“Turn ye even to me, saith the Lord, with all your heart.”

*Epistle.*



ESTERDAY, beloved, we were humbling ourselves before God, “worthily lamenting our sins,” and turning unto Him “with weeping, fasting, and praying.”

We were pleading His mercy and His love, even while acknowledging that we deserved only punishment.

To-day, we hear God’s gracious answer, as a voice from heaven, “Turn ye to me with all your heart.” It is the same loving message as of old. It is the forgiving Father again opening his arms to receive His returning prodigal, while His heart yearns over him with unutterable love.

But how are we to turn to God? Again come His own words in reply—“With all your *heart*.” He asks not costly gifts, which only the rich can bring. He asks not profound learning, which only the highly gifted intellect can offer. He asks not noble works, which only the strong hand of labor can accomplish. He asks that which is within the reach of the youngest, the poorest, the feeblest—that which all possess, and which all must bestow upon some chosen object of affection. He asks the *heart*.

But, He asks *all* the heart. We must not be partial in our gift. *All or none!* “Ye *can not* serve God and *Mammon*,” is the voice of reason and experience as well as inspiration.


A little boat lay floating on the water; the waves rolling in around it, lovingly caressed it, and wooed it to sail out in their arms on the broad ocean. It rose and fell as they sported around it, but it moved no further. What held it back? Nothing but a slender chain. But it proved too powerful even for the ocean waves. That little boat is the type of many a soul. “Turn unto me,” saith the Lord; and by the admonitions of conscience, by the promises and warnings of His word, by the voice of some faithful friend or pastor, He urges man to embrace His love. The soul feels these influences—it is to a certain extent affected by them, but it still holds back. Some single sin yet clung to—some long indulged habit—some worldly influence—small in itself, but strong enough to keep the soul from God. O beloved! see to it that such is not your state. Examine your heart by the aid of the Holy Spirit, and be sure that *all* is surrendered to God.

“Is there a thing beneath the sun,  
That strives with Thee my heart to share?  
Ah! tear it thence, and reign alone,  
The Lord of every motion there.  
Then shall my heart from earth be free,  
When it has found its all in Thee.”

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## THURSDAY EVENING.

"Who knoweth if He will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him?"—*Epistle.*

N our meditation this evening, let us consider the blessing which God leaves "behind Him," when He in mercy visits the soul.

To the nation of Israel, threatened with "the palmer worm, the locust, and the caterpillar," the sign of the removal of God's judgments would be the return of fruitful vineyards and abundant harvests, that they might have a "meat-offering and a drink-offering to present unto the Lord."

But what is the blessing left behind, when God's judgments are removed from the *individual soul*? Truly "they are more in number than the sand." Let us, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, seek to contemplate a few.

"I believe in the forgiveness of sins." The words are on our lips whenever we enter the sanctuary, and if in our hearts as well, what peace and comfort do they not afford! If, like the pilgrim, our burden of sin has been rolled off by the sight of the Cross, with him we will be "glad and lightsome, and say with a merry heart, He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death."

But God also leaves behind Him the blessed as-

surance of His guiding and preserving love. His children are taught that "all things shall work together" for their good. They know life is not all sunshine, ease, and security; but they know too that every event of it is ordered by ineffable wisdom and love.

And with what beams of heaven is the sunset of the Christian life irradiated! The worldling shudders, as well he may, at the contemplation of death. But to the child of God it is the door of heaven, opening to admit him to a Saviour's arms.

Who, for such blessings, would not part with all the joys this world can offer? Husks, even at the best, are utterly insufficient to satisfy the cravings of the immortal soul.

Christian, let then the thought of what we now possess, and what we hope to obtain, lead us to trample the world beneath our feet, and press onward and upward to the skies, where our ravished eyes shall behold the King in His glory, and with adoring gratitude we will lay our crowns at Jesus' feet.

"Return to me, my oft-forgotten God,  
My spirit's true though long forsaken rest;  
Undo these bars, reënter Thine abode;  
In Thee and in Thy love alone would I be blest.

"Re-mould this inner man in every part,  
Re-knit these broken ties, resume Thy sway;  
Take, as Thy throne and altar, this poor heart;  
Oh! teach me how to love, oh! help me to obey."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## FRIDAY MORNING.

“When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites.”—*Gospel.*



AS the Saviour walked in and out among men—His omniscient eye, scanning not only their outward life, but even their most secret thoughts—who, think you, must have appeared most offensive to his view? Not the publicans and sinners. He condescended to be called their “*Friend*.” But there was a class who received His severest, most uncompromising denunciations. “Woe unto you, *hypocrites!*” For these He had no sympathy, no tolerance.

Who are the hypocrites? Have we such now, or was our Saviour rebuking a sin which no longer exists? Alas! they meet us on every hand—in the places of business, in the halls of amusement, even in the sanctuaries of God. Let us look sharply—one may be concealed within the recesses of our own hearts.

The Pharisees of our Saviour’s time put on a “sad countenance,” and “disfigured their faces, that they might appear unto men to fast.” They came before their fellows bowing down their heads as a bulrush, and wearing all the externals of woe, to elicit human admiration, when the true penitent would have

sought the retirement of his closet, "to afflict his soul" before God.

And the hypocrite of the nineteenth century is not unlike his brother of the first. Rigid in the observance of the externals of religion, he often exceeds the sincere Christian in his regard for all the outward rites of the Church, and is most indefatigable in his attendance upon holy-days, and feast-days, and fast-days. But his closet seldom sees him bowed in humiliation before God, bewailing in secret the sins of his soul.

"He has his reward!" "Man looketh on the outward appearance," and is easily satisfied; and so long as the hypocrite can successfully wear the mask, he receives and enjoys the only approval he covets. But "what is the hope of the hypocrite when God taketh away his soul?"

Let us aim, therefore, not to *seem*, but to *be*. "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Oh! what shame shall then cover the faces of the hypocrites!

"Day of wrath, that day of burning,  
All shall melt, to ashes turning,  
All foretold by seers discerning.

"Oh! what fear it shall engender,  
When the Judge shall come in splendor,  
Strict to mark, and just to render!"

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## FRIDAY EVENING.

“That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret.”—*Gospel.*



WHAT is the nature of the fasting which our Lord here recommends to His disciples? “In the Law, the only term used to denote the religious observance of fasting is the more significant one, ‘*afflicting the soul.*’” “True fasting is not a piece of mere externalism—a mere mechanical act; it is far higher. It is a fasting which the soul undergoes, not an outward abstinence which the body alone can feel. It consists in humbling the soul, in wearing a meek, lowly, and humble spirit. This is fasting worthy of the name.”

But we are not left to human judgment to determine this matter. The word of God has given us the most exact explanation—“*Is not this the fast which I have chosen?*” to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”

No mere abstinence from animal food, or from all food, will meet the requirements of such a fast.

“That thou appear not unto men to fast.” Only thus can the true end of fasting be promoted. Godly sorrow seeks to hide itself from the world. It shuns the notice of men. Feeling his utter unworthiness, the penitent shrinks from human praise as from a Upas breath, and strives only to approve himself unto God. To have His smile, to feel His love, to know Him as a reconciled Father in Christ—these are the rewards which the true Christian seeks—these are prizes sweeter than all the incense of human adulation.

Let us learn thus to fast unto God, despising the rewards and praises of men. Let us wear the smile upon our face, the phrases of kindness upon our tongue, not as masks of hypocrisy, but because our hearts are smiling in the sunlight of God’s favor, and welling over with a Saviour’s love.

“’Tis not too hard, too high an aim,  
Secure thy part in Christ to claim;  
The sensual instinct to control,  
And warm with purer fires the soul.  
Nature will raise up all her strife,  
Foe to the self-abasing life,  
Loth in a Saviour’s death to share,  
Her daily cross compelled to bear.  
But grace, omnipotent at length,  
Shall arm the saint with saving strength;  
Through the sharp war with aid attend,  
And his long conflict sweetly end.”



"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## SATURDAY MORNING.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth."—*Gospel.*



**W**HAT are these "treasures upon earth," which Christ forbids to His disciples? A handful of yellow dust, a few bright dreams, a puff of human praise, a little honey from wisdom's hive—riches, pleasure, honor, learning—these are the treasures which men hold so tightly that all the rewards of eternity are but as baubles in comparison. For these men toil, rising up early and taking rest late, until often the body is enfeebled and the spirit broken, in the vain pursuit. The phantom flies fast as they follow it. But they rush madly on. They grasp it, when it disappears altogether, and its wretched victim is left to utter despair.

But even when the pursuit is successful and the treasure gained, can it bring peace to the soul? Let us learn the answer from the experience of the wise man. (Eccl. 1 and 2.) He pursued earthly happiness with the determination to gather from every flower the honey it contained; and he had advantages which no one else has ever possessed. "I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not mine heart from any

joy." Now, what was the result of his experiment?  
"All was vanity and vexation of spirit."

Why is this? It is because the soul of man can not be satisfied with any thing short of its Creator. We may stifle its cries, we may deaden its pleadings until we think ourselves free from its control; but there are times when it will burst its bonds and assert its native dignity, and the strong man bows in fear before it.

These treasures, too, are fleeting. They bear in themselves the seeds of decay. Our loved ones may be taken from us, our wealth flee away, our fair name be soiled by calumny, our most cherished hopes blasted. Pleasure soon satiates, and learning may destroy the mind that seeks it. Not one is enduring; not one can sustain our fainting hearts when we tread the dark valley; not one plead for us before the throne of God.

Shall we, then, barter all our hopes of heaven for these vanities of earth, and, Esau-like, renounce our birthright for a mess of pottage, when in His great mercy Jesus has commanded, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth"?

"It is not earthly pleasure,  
That withers in a day;  
It is not mortal treasure,  
That flieth soon away;  
It is not friends that leave us,  
It is not sense, nor sin,  
That smile but to deceive us,  
Can give us peace within."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## SATURDAY EVENING.

"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."—*Gospel*



**W**HAT a strange command is this! We can very well understand what our Lord means, when He warns us against laying up treasures upon *earth*. But can *we*, creatures of *sin*, whose very entrance into heaven is the gift of God's unmerited love—can we *lay up treasures* there? It must be so. The Master never gives a command which it is not in the power of His servant to fulfill. The injunction only reveals to us another phase of God's abounding love. While our Saviour's admonition is, "When ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants," He so delights to confer favors upon us that He promises an eternal reward for every act of loving service. Even the "cup of cold water" is not to pass unnoticed; while those who shall be reviled and persecuted for the Son of Man's sake He calls upon to "leap for joy," because their "reward is great in heaven."

"For my sake"! This is the motive which gives to any act its all of value. Without it we may bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and even give our bodies to be burned, yet it shall profit us nothing.\*

We can not follow our Lord as did the disciples of old, and wait upon Him with our personal ministrations. We can not bathe His feet with our tears, or anoint His head with precious ointment. But we have His representatives among us, whom He has appointed to be the recipients and proofs of our love to Him. So entirely does He identify them with Himself that He says, "*I was an hungered, I was thirsty, I was a stranger. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*"

Are we thus engaged in laying up treasures in heaven? Are we recognizing Christ's representatives on earth, and ministering to them "as we have opportunity"? It is a blessed service; a service confined to no rank or condition. The widow's mite outweighed, in the Lord's estimation, all the gifts of the rich; and many an obscure saint of the present day, who meekly bears his cross after Jesus in lowly self-denial, humility, and love, will wear a brighter crown than some whose praises are sounded abroad as with the blast of a trumpet.

"Be brave, my brother!

He whom thou servest slights

Not e'en His weakest one;

No deed, though poor, shall be forgot,

However feebly done.

The prayer, the wish, the thought,

The faintly spoken word,

The plan that seemed to come to naught,

Each has its own reward."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

MORNING.

"O Lord! who for our sake didst fast."—*Collect.*



OW different was the life which Christ led in the flesh to His life as the co-eternal Son of God! Truly may the Apostle say, "He humbled Himself" when He condescended to assume our nature, and "the likeness of sinful flesh." And yet it was of His own free will that He came to earth. It was to accomplish an object which could be gained in no other way. It was "*for our sake*"—to rescue us from the grasp of Satan.

The life which Jesus came to lead was a *representative* one, undertaken wholly in behalf of others. I fear we do not always keep this fact sufficiently before our minds, that not only the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ were vicarious in their nature, but that every act of His human life was equally so. Surely we would read the Gospel with more interest, we would feel ourselves more thoroughly identified with the life of Jesus, if, as we followed Him in His toilsome journeys, as we saw His miracles and heard His words, and as we listened to the reproaches which His enemies heaped

upon Him, we would say to ourselves, All this was done and endured for me.

He whose rightful seat was the throne of God, which "is forever and ever," thus voluntarily surrendered His glory and became the "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"—"for our sake." How should this thought touch our hearts, beloved! Surely if we are not "altogether brutish," we will be filled with adoring gratitude and love. We will cry, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" We will take our stand with grateful joy beneath the banner of the Cross, "not ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto our life's end."

If we are satisfied with any thing short of this, after such self-sacrificing love in our behalf, we are not worthy of our humanity—not worthy of these immortal souls which God the Father created, and which only the Son of God could redeem.

"Jesus, whom angel hosts adore,  
Became a man of grief for me;  
In love, though rich, becoming poor,  
That I through Him enriched might be.


"In love the whole dark path He trod,  
To consecrate a way for me;  
Each bitter footstep marked with blood,  
From Bethlehem to Calvary."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not wortny of Me.”

## FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

NOON.

“Give us grace to use such abstinence.”—*Collect.*

UCH abstinence! In soul sickness as well as bodily ailments, the remedy must be suited to the disease; and our Church, recognizing this fact, wisely directs her children to use such means as will best accomplish the end. The *means* she here sets forth is abstinence; the *end*, that our flesh may be subdued to the spirit.

Does she speak to any whose chief thought is, “What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” To them she would say, Restrain your fleshly appetite, turn away from the sparkling wine-cup, renounce the robes of pride, and devote the time and money thus saved to feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. Does she speak to any whose greatest concern is to heap up riches? She says to them, “Sell that ye have and give alms; provide yourself bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, that faileth not.” Are others so absorbed in worldly pleasure, in the whirl of the dance, the music of the opera, or the miseries of fictitious woe, that the wail rising from thousands

of breaking hearts is wholly unheard? To such she says, Bring back your hearts from these delights; tread the lanes and alleys where real misery hides, and pour your tears of sympathy over the widow's and orphan's woe.

Thus may we easily ascertain what abstinence we need, by discovering what sin is abounding in our hearts. Here must we use the sharp knife of self-denial. Here must we dig deep, that we may utterly root out this evil principle, and plant in its stead some of the precious fruits of the Spirit of God.

But the flesh rises up in rebellion, and murmurs against such treatment; and we are moved to pity and to spare. Let us remember, that even the right eye and the right hand are to be sacrificed if they stand in the way of our final salvation. For it is better to go into the kingdom of God stripped of all, than by keeping all to be cast into hell-fire. Let us pray then to Him who alone knoweth the secret wickedness of our hearts, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean."

"We need not bid, for cloistered cell,  
Our neighbor and our work farewell;  
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high  
For sinful man beneath the sky.

"The trivial round, the common task;  
Would furnish all we ought to ask;  
Room to deny ourselves, a road  
To bring us daily nearer God."



“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

EVENING.

“That we may ever obey Thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness.”—*Collect.*



WHEN love is the controlling principle, obedience is an easy and a delightful task. “I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea thy law is within my heart.” God’s law, engraved “in tables of stone,” terrifies and condemns; it produces at best but the tardy service of the slave. But written “in fleshly tables of the heart,” it excites to the prompt and loving obedience of the child. This is the spirit we have been cultivating, if we have been practising “such abstinence” as our Church requires.

An obedience such as this will be one which recognizes God’s supreme right over our lives, our time, our money, our reputation, our all. It will be prompt, cheerful, entire, and perpetual. But there seems to be such a disposition to make our religion an eclectic thing. To sit down over our Bibles, and pick out, each one for himself, whatever precepts accord best with his own peculiarities of disposition and character, and practically, at least, to ignore all others. Thus the avaricious man turns with self-righteous indignation from the poor wretch

who steals to satisfy his soul when hungry, or who drowns his misery in the intoxicating cup; but he passes by on the other side when he meets the command, "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor." The pharisee will tithe even the herbs of the field, but he is wholly oblivious to the precept, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The votary of pleasure will discourse eloquently upon the gospel promises, but is utterly deaf to "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, can not be my disciple."

Are such deceiving themselves? They must be if Christ speaks true. "By their fruits ye shall know them." "Not every one that *saieth* unto me, Lord, Lord, but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Let it be our earnest prayer and constant effort "to observe *all things whatsoever*" which Christ has commanded us. He will be with us to assist and to bless; He will grant us the strengthening influence of His Holy Spirit; and He will finally bestow a crown of everlasting life upon every one that "endureth to the end."

"Behold, I come with joy to do  
The Master's blessed will;  
My Lord in outward works pursue,  
And serve His pleasure still.  
Thus, faithful to my Lord's commands,  
I choose the better part,  
And serve with careful Martha's hands,  
And loving Mary's heart."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## MONDAY MORNING.

"Workers together with Him."—*Epistle.*



**W**HAT happiness would it be to us if our dim eyes could pierce through the veil which hides the spiritual from us, and see our Lord ever with us as we toil for Him! "Lo, I am with you alway," are His own most gracious words. Why are we so "slow of heart to believe"? Why so dull of ear to hear His tender expressions of encouragement and love? "Lord, increase our faith."

When we go forth from the night's repose to battle anew with the world, we go not alone. A friend ever walks by our side, to strengthen for duty, to smooth the rugged way, to cheer us in our trial, to sympathize with us in trouble, to warn us when we would stray, and to reward us with His blessing.

Would you labor with Jesus? Then go in spirit to the synagogue, and learn from His own lips what is His work. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

It is not presumption to say that something of this work He has committed to each one of His disciples. Do you ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He replies by His servant Solomon, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do." How often we miss our work by looking too high! Seeking for "great things," we scorn the small, and neglect many precious opportunities of speaking a word for Jesus or healing a broken heart. We look abroad over the world's vast fields "white to the harvest," and sigh to enter in and gather for Jesus, while our own little corner of the vineyard lies bare and neglected.

Let us be satisfied, then, if we are laboring for the Master. Whether He call us to rule a kingdom, as Daniel, or only to give a cup of cold water; whether to preach "the everlasting gospel," or only to suffer reproach for His dear name; the work will be equally sweet if we have the consciousness that the eye of Jesus is on us, that the heart of Jesus is blessing us, that the home of Jesus is awaiting us, that we are toiling *for* Him and *with* Him.


"Workman of God, oh! lose not heart,  
But learn what God is like;  
And in the darkest battle-field  
Thou shalt know where to strike.

"Oh! blest is he to whom is given  
The instinct that can tell  
That God is in the field when He  
Is most invisible."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## MONDAY EVENING.

“Receive not the grace of God in vain.”—*Epistle.*

S the Apostle addressing only those who have never known the grace of God, when he makes this earnest and affectionate entreaty? Such, indeed, have received His grace utterly in vain—worse than in vain; for they are treasuring up “wrath against the day of wrath.”

But it is not only such as these that receive the grace of God in vain. The Apostle addressed his epistle “to the *Church of God* which is at Corinth, with all the *saints* which are in all Achaia.” The warning, then, comes also to those who number themselves among the people of God. And, beloved, when we remember that all is of grace from first to last; that it was grace which awakened the first desire after a Saviour in our hearts; that it was grace which led us to the Cross and taught us to believe; and that it is grace alone which is now carrying on the work in our hearts; and when, also, we see what little progress we have made in the divine life, what poor examples of Christianity we set before others, how dimly our light shines—surely we must acknowledge that we receive much of God’s grace in vain.

Grace is a perpetual stream of quickening influences, flowing down to our souls from the throne of God; and faith and prayer are the means by which its precious waters irrigate and fructify the soil of our hearts. Is it "a rough, barren soil," bearing little fruit to God's glory? It is because we draw not as we should of these life-giving waters. We are receiving much of the grace of God in vain.

These heavenly influences are around us, free and abundant as the sunlight and the dew. But if our hearts are a desert waste, what will it profit us? Let us rouse ourselves from our indifferent apathy. Let us rise to a just consideration of our privileges and responsibilities. Let us remember that "unto whom much is given, of him shall be much required." Let us learn to draw day by day, and hour by hour, from these never-failing streams, a full supply for every time of need. Then shall we "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

"Sower divine!

Let not this barren clay  
Lead Thee to turn away;  
Let not my fruitlessness  
Provoke Thee not to bless;  
Let not this field be dry,  
Refresh it from on high.

Sower divine!

Water this heart of mine."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.

## TUESDAY MORNING.

"Now is the accepted time."—*Epistle.*



LET us suppose that in our daily walks we saw posted on every corner the notice, "A Splendid Inheritance, to be freely given to all who apply, without regard to condition or circumstances!" would not our side-walks be blocked up by the throngs collecting to read and discuss this precious offer? And if its truth were placed beyond a doubt, so that those who read firmly believed in its reality, how jubilant every heart would be at the heirdom that would become his for the asking!

And suppose to this gratifying announcement there was added a caution that this munificent offer would be made only for a limited time, and that immediate application was the only guarantee of success, the crowds thronging the streets would instantly form into a solid column, each one pressing on with eager haste, lest he should arrive too late.

We know this would be so with earthly treasures; how is it with the heavenly inheritance? Broadcast over the world, wherever a Bible has found its way, or a Christian heart has told the message of redeeming love, there the invitation has gone forth, "Come, without money and without price." "Whosoever

will, let him come." But to these glorious invitations is added a warning clause, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." "Now is the accepted time." Surely the gates of heaven are thronged day and night by eager souls thirsting for the promised boon. Alas! alas! the Father stands waiting in vain for His returning prodigals. The Son, hanging upon the Cross, exclaims, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" The Holy Spirit carries home the invitation to the individual conscience, and by the terrors of the law and the soft still voice of the Gospel, in vain urges its acceptance.

Man—blinded, besotted man—turns from all to follow the glittering baubles of time and sense. The "accepted time" passes by. The archangel's trumpet sounds in his ear. He rouses—he starts—he wakes—to find himself—in hell!

Do you believe this? And can you stand idly by and see souls for whom Jesus died rushing madly on toward that dreadful gulf, without making a single effort to save them?

"How far may we go on in sin?

How long will God forbear?

Where does hope end? And where begin

The confines of despair?

"An answer from the skies is sent—

Ye that from God depart,

While it is called to-day, repent!


And harden not your heart."



“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## TUESDAY EVENING.

“Giving no offense.”—*Epistle.*

HAT ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, *without rebuke*, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” St. Paul in these words explains what he would have us understand by “giving no offense.” It is not that we are to please and conciliate by ever yielding to the world. By no means. But it is to lead lives so spotless that no censure can touch us. Like our divine Master, we are so to walk before men, that even our enemies will be compelled to declare, “I find no fault in him.”

“Ye shall be witnesses unto me,” said Christ. It is a lofty station to which He thus calls us. How circumspect we should be, then! How jealous of our Master’s cause! How careful to support His authority before the world! How particular, lest our garments should contract any defilements from its polluting influences! Like the sun are we to go forth to do our Creator’s bidding, carrying life and warmth and joy wherever our influence extends, but losing naught of brightness and purity ourselves.

This can only be done by ever watching unto

prayer. The enemy of souls is too subtle, willingly to permit any true worker for God to go on his way "giving no offense." He will use every weapon in his armory to overcome him, rather than not succeed. Is there then any hope! Much, beloved! "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The Christian soldier can go forth to the conflict, with the pæan of victory already on his lips, ere a single blow has been struck. For he knows in whom he has believed, and that no weapon which is formed against him shall prosper.

And what shall the end be? "I looked, and lo! a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with him, an hundred and forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written on their foreheads. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God, and to the Lamb. *And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God.*"

"Ah! give me, Lord, the tender heart  
That trembles at the approach of sin;  
A godly fear of sin impart,  
Implant and root it deep within.  
That I may dread Thy gracious power,  
And never dare to offend Thee more."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## WEDNESDAY MORNING.

“Approving ourselves in much patience,” etc.—*Epistle.*



Who starts out on the Christian life expecting to meet only fair winds on his voyage, makes a sad, a fatal mistake. “The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord.” Jesus Christ led a life of perfect sinlessness. His whole mission was to benefit and bless His fellow-men; His whole life was spent in doing them good; and yet “He was despised and rejected,” tauntingly called “a friend of publicans and sinners,” and pursued with insult and opprobrium by the malice of His enemies, even to the cross.

And yet He found disciples to embrace His cause and willing to endure for His sake every form of suffering and death, which a fiendish imagination could suggest. St. Paul himself draws this picture of the Christian warfare; and it sounds like an old warrior recounting his battles in a lull of the conflict. He had experienced them all, and was to endure even more for the Master he so dearly loved—he was yet to die for Him. Did he shrink then? Listen to his death-song, chanted in the prison-house, where he was waiting from day to day to be led forth to execution: “I am now ready to

be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day."

Do we desire to die like St. Paul? Then we must live like him. We must "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus." We must follow Him who "endured the cross, despising the shame." Rest assured, beloved, that if we are bearing no cross, the badge of our discipleship is wanting. If we are trying to make our religion an easy one, it will go hard with us at the last. If we are endeavoring to maintain our hold of the world, we lose God and heaven.

How terrible it will be to part with all the bliss of eternity, to stand before Christ at the last, only to be disowned by Him, because we were unwilling to deny ourselves any of the joys of time.

"The Son of God is gone to war,  
A kingly crown to gain;  
His blood-red banner streams afar:  
Who follows in His train?"

"Who best can drink His cup of woe,  
And triumph over pain;  
Who boldest bears His cross below,  
He follows in His train."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## WEDNESDAY EVENING.

"Having nothing, yet possessing all things."—*Epistle.*



IN all the range of literature, human and divine, there is nothing that can excel in grandeur this sublime paradox, descriptive of the Christian life, in its two-fold aspect. Let us look at it, beloved, as St. Paul has pictured it: and first from the world's stand-point.

The humble child of God must suffer "dishonor and evil report." How the world scorns the sincere Christian! how it gloats over any "evil report" that attaches itself to his name, and spreads it abroad on the swift wings of calumny. The Christian is "unknown," his name as such never appears in the world's heraldry; he is a "dying" creature; he is "chastened;" he is "sorrowful," yea, very sorrowful, for he bears in his body the remains of a sinful nature that is constantly striving to rise into new life and power. But this is not the only cause of his sorrow. He sees the laws of his God constantly set at defiance; he hears the name of his God daily blasphemed; he witnesses immortal souls passing rapidly on into eternity, wholly unprepared to meet their Judge. Can he be otherwise than sorrowful? He is "poor, having nothing." Often this is literally true, and always true with regard to the frail

tenure by which he holds his earthly possessions. This is one side of the picture, and, beloved, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

Now let us look at the other side—Faith's standpoint, "By honor and good report;" yes, even from the world itself; for "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." "We live" and are "not killed;" for the sting of death is removed and the grave has lost its victory. "Always rejoicing;" for "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "Making many rich" by making them partakers of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." "Possessing all things;" yea, says the Apostle, "All things are yours; whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Surely eternity will be too short to render our ascriptions of praise "unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father."

"Oh! life below, how brief, and poor, and sad!

One heavy sigh.

Oh! life above, how long, how fair, how glad!

An endless joy.

Oh! to be done with daily dying here;

Oh! to begin the living in yon sphere."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.

## THURSDAY MORNING.

"Then was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil."—*Gospel*.



WHEN our Lord by His baptism had entered into covenant with His Church, had thus taken His public stand as the Head and Representative of His people, and had been recognized and accepted as such by God Himself, "Immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness." As the first Adam had fallen through the wiles of Satan, and had dragged down his whole posterity into ruin with him; so the second Adam, who now stood forth as the Redeemer of the race, must be subjected to the same ordeal at the very outset of his vicarious life. In the conditions of the temptation, the first Adam had everywhere the advantage. He was placed in a garden of infinite delight; his appetite regaled itself without stint upon every thing which could afford it gratification; while the second Adam was driven into a "waste, howling wilderness," "with the wild beasts," and His powers of endurance and resistance weakened by a forty days' fast.

Neither are we to suppose that Christ's humanity was so supported by His divinity, that failure was impossible. To believe this is to do away entirely

with the moral significance of the whole transaction, and to make it utterly without worth, as a part of the scheme of human redemption. The whole tenor of the narrative, and its position at the very beginning of Christ's mediatorial work, shows that it is intended to be considered the direct counterpart of Adam's trial. Nor would Satan have met Him on such terms; for the arch-enemy would have been too cunning to risk an engagement where failure would be inevitable.

No! our blessed Lord met the enemy as a man; without any other weapons than those which He places in the hands of every one of His disciples—the Word and the Spirit. And He conquered. And because He has conquered, we may conquer. The contest is not over. Satan is not yet destroyed. Every soldier of the Cross must be “led up of the Spirit, to be tempted.” But, with this victory before us, with the great Captain of our salvation ever by our side, with the Word and the Spirit, we go forth to no uncertain struggle.

“In the way a thousand snares  
Lie to take us unawares;  
Satan, with malicious art,  
Watches each unguarded heart  
But from Satan's malice free,  
Saints shall soon in glory be;  
Soon the joyful news will come,  
‘Child, your Father calls, come home!’”



“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## THURSDAY EVENING.

“If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”—*Gospel.*



F thou be the Son of God.” But forty days before and a voice from heaven had declared His Sonship, and the Holy Dove had descended upon Him in attestation of its truth, and yet He had been driven into the wilderness, with no food to sustain His failing strength, with no sympathizing friend to encourage His human heart, with no companions but “the wild beasts.” He who said to others, “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?” was Himself surrounded with stones instead of bread.

It is just at this point that Satan makes his first attack. It is as if he had said, “Can God be Thy Father, and yet permit Thee to suffer the pangs of hunger in the wilderness? He placed Adam in a garden full of every delight; but Thee He has driven into the wilderness! Since Thy Father has forsaken Thee, assert Thy own divinity. If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”

Had Christ done so—had He drawn directly on His divine resources in this hour of trial, our salva-

tion would have been imperilled. He had purposely laid aside the glory of His Godhead, and become man for us, that as man He might bruise the serpent's head, and destroy the power of the devil. And in the hour of trial He would use no means of deliverance which would not be within the reach of His weakest disciple. He would trust simply to the love and care of His heavenly Father, and depend only upon Him for a supply in this His time of need. "Man shall not live by bread alone," is His reply to the tempter, "but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

How precious is the lesson He thus teaches us ! Are we suffering from any of the varied ills of life, and tempted to use unlawful means to secure relief, or to doubt our sonship because thus afflicted ? Does Satan whisper, "God hath forgotten him ;" and are we almost ready to believe the lie ? Let us at such a time follow our Saviour into the wilderness ; and let us learn from Him to trust to God's love and care, even in the darkest hour.

" Though sin would make me doubt,  
And fill my soul with fears ;  
Though God seem to shut out  
My daily cries and tears ;  
Though human help depart,  
And flesh draw near to dust,  
Let faith keep up my heart  
To love God, true and just."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## FRIDAY MORNING.

"If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down."--*Gospel.*



GAIN Satan calls in question the Sonship of our Lord, and demands miraculous proof of it. He urges Christ to place Himself in circumstances where the divine intervention will be necessary for His preservation, by casting Himself down from one of the lofty pinnacles of the Temple—an act which, without such intervention, would be instant death. Even Satan can quote Scripture when it serves his turn, and he now seeks to goad Christ on to His destruction with a promise drawn from God's own word, "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." He hoped, perhaps, to excite in Jesus a spirit of presumptuous confidence, that would prove the ruin of Himself and His cause.

But again the shaft falls harmless. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Christ here evidently teaches that it is wrong to place ourselves in unnecessary peril, in expectation that God will stand forth for our relief. On this principle our Lord always acted. Never did He expose Himself to useless dangers; but placing His trust in His

Father, He encountered only such as His divine mission rendered necessary, and which He could not avoid without unfaithfulness.

“Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.” Yet how apt are we to reverse the lesson! Bold, venturesome, risking often even life itself in pursuit of business or pleasure, we become cautious and cowardly when we are called to encounter danger and difficulty in the cause of Christ.

Our Blessed Lord, knowing the weakness and frailty of our mortal nature, has taught us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” Does Christ find it necessary to put His people on their guard against presumption? Let us not then, beloved, be puffed up in our fleshly minds, and think that we can stand where others fall. Let us rather shun temptation wherever we can consistently with duty. But when God by His providence calls us into danger, we may go forth fearlessly, assured that He “who knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation,” will, if need be, even give His angels charge over us.

“See the Lord, thy Keeper, stand  
Omnipotently near;  
Lo! He holds thee by thy hand,  
And banishes thy fear;  
Shadows with His wings thy head;  
Guards thee from impending harms;  
Round thee and beneath are spread  
The everlasting arms.”

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## FRIDAY EVENING.

"All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me."—*Gospel.*



OR the third time the enemy approached. It is the heirship of the Son which he now attacks, as if he said, "You call yourself the Son of God; but He does not acknowledge you. He promised His Son all the kingdoms of earth for the asking; yet Thou hast not a foot of ground to call Thy own, nor even a place to lay Thy head. God will have none of Thee. The kingdoms of the world are *mine*. I am 'the god of this world.' Its power and glory are committed unto me; and 'to whomsoever I will, I give it. If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine.'" The tempter comes out boldly now. It is his last hope. If he can win Christ from His allegiance, even by so costly a bait, it were cheaply done. The first Adam was conquered by a single apple. Shall he fail of the Second with so rich a bribe?

But Christ indignantly rejects the offer. "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

The same temptation comes to all the "joint-

heirs with Christ." How often do we seem to be left alone in the wilderness of this world; enemies all around and darkness enshrouding our pathway! And then the tempter draws nigh. You call yourself the "heir of God," but where is your inheritance? Son of a King, where is your "best robe," your "shoes," your "ring"? Where is the seal, the evidence of your heirship? You are poor; the object of contempt and ridicule. Yield to my authority. I will give you honor and distinction. Leave these by-paths. Come forth into the world, and all shall be yours. And blinded by his delusion, heaven grows misty, faith's eyes are dimmed, the inheritance seems doubtful and uncertain; but the present is all glowing with life and joy and mirth. Alas! how many lose sight of the real nature of the kingdom of Christ; let go the heavenly for the earthly, and sell their inheritance for a mess of pottage!

But Christ says, "My kingdom is not of this world;" and we are "hid with Christ in God." Let us then, beloved, with patient hope wait for its manifestation, knowing that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

"I'll not leave Jesus—never, never!  
Ah! what can more precious be?  
Rest, and light, and joy are ever  
In His hand to give to me.  
All things that can satisfy,  
Having Jesus, these have I."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## SATURDAY MORNING.

"It is written."—*Gospel.*



WE are led in our meditation to-day to consider the weapons with which our Blessed Lord foiled the great adversary. Were they drawn from His own Omnipotence, the signs and proofs of His Godhead? No, beloved, such victory as we have seen before would have been utterly without meaning or power in the scheme of man's redemption. Christ went forth as the "Captain of our Salvation," doing battle for His people. But He went only in the might of the *Word* and the *Spirit*. No weapons would He use but such as we can use. The *Word* of God was the sword which He wielded by the power of the *Spirit* of God; and this sword He has placed in the hand of each one of us. How wonderful is the grace and the humility which our Saviour manifested in this whole encounter; and how great was His success!

And the same conflict is continued with us. Not a single soul is Satan willing to lose. No sooner does he see his prey seeking to escape, than the battle is renewed. Each human heart is a field of contest, far more important than any plain of earth; for the prize of victory is an immortal soul. Can any conquer in such a strife with such an enemy? Yes, beloved, all may conquer; and all will conquer

if we but use aright the weapons which the Saviour proved.

There is an "It is written" for every temptation; a sword that will cut through every device of the enemy. But we must have our weapons ready. What would you think of a soldier who commences to prepare himself only when he is attacked, and the fight actually begins? So the Christian must arm himself with the Word of God ere the battle commences. He must make it his daily study—his meditation day and night. He must have the very *words* of Scripture in his heart, else will his memory oft deceive, and his weapon prove a broken blade.

The word of God then, beloved, made "quick and powerful" by the mighty agency of the Holy Ghost, given in answer to our prayers, will make us "more than conquerors" in every assault of the foe. Let us then love our Bibles more—let us study them more—let us turn to them for direction in every hour of doubt or difficulty—let us find in them comfort and support amid affliction. Then shall we "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

"Faith, like a simple, unsuspecting child,  
Serenely resting on its mother's arm,  
Reposing every care upon her God,  
Sleeps in His bosom, and expects no harm.

"However deep be the mysterious word,  
However dark, she disbelieves it not;  
Where Reason would examine, Faith obeys,  
And 'It is written' answers every doubt."



"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## SATURDAY EVENING.

"Angels came and ministered unto Him."—*Gospel.*



HE tempter "departed from him for a season." Foiled, but not yet utterly hopeless of final victory, he waited for a new opportunity, when his victim would be placed even at a greater disadvantage than at present. But "for a season" the conflict was suspended, and the warrior, exhausted both in body and in mind, remained alone in the wilderness. No human aid was there to provide for His necessities and to rejoice over His triumph. On all the face of His broad earth, that earth which He had come to redeem, there was not a single human heart which could understand or sympathize in such an hour with the suffering Son of God. But now the Father fulfills the promise which the tempter had quoted to his own disadvantage. He gives His angels charge over Him, and on the wings of love they came and "ministered unto Him." We can easily imagine the blessed consolations they would impart; not merely strengthening His weakened body with invigorating food, as they did Elijah's of old, but refreshing His soul with heavenly consolations and encouragements, and bracing Him for future conflicts.

Does the parallel between Christ and His people

hold good here? Are we so "one in Christ Jesus" that we may look for the same angelic beings to attend us? Yes, we are assured of it. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" If, then, we have the blessed hope that this title belongs to us, we also have encouragement to believe that the holy angels wait even upon us, though God has condescended to teach us very little respecting the nature of their services. We know not how many of our life's burdens are lightened, how many difficulties removed, how many dangers warded off, how many whispers of God's love and mercy breathed by these heavenly attendants; but we do know that even amid all the ineffable bliss of heaven "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Yet even this blessing we owe to Christ. "Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened," said Jesus, "and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Yes, whatever be the nature and extent of their service, not one of them would ever have touched this earth had not Jesus died and thus opened heaven.

"Thou hast appointed angels to defend  
And succor us on earth. How can we show  
Our sense of that great goodness which could lend  
Holy companions for weak men below?  
They raise our hearts to Thee, and still refuse  
Homage or worship, (which we ne'er could pay ;)  
And their appointed guardianship we use  
To lead to Christ—the Life, the Truth, the Way."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

MORNING.

"We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves."—*Collect.*



AS a general thing this knowledge that we are insufficient of ourselves to help ourselves, comes to us only after repeated lapses from God have taught us our own utter weakness. We are too prone, like Peter, to assert rashly, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death," and when the time of temptation comes, to find our boasted confidence all gone, and ourselves the deniers of our Master. And yet the young Christian is oftentimes discouraged and ready to despair because he fails to do what the Word of God and the experience of every tried Christian will teach him he never can. He never can be independent of God's aid.

We should, therefore, "have no confidence in the flesh." Into what awful sins have even God's own people been betrayed who have trusted in their own strength. Alas for our weak, sinful hearts when we let go our hold of God! Well may we fear when even David fell, and learn the utter folly of trusting in ourselves. Nothing is more helpless than the heart of man unassisted by divine grace. It is a beleaguered castle surrounded on all sides by its mortal

foes, and with a traitor within its walls. For a time the instincts of a natural conscience may preserve a man from open sin, but without the grace of God nothing is needed but a sufficiently strong temptation to break down his virtue and surrender him over to vice. How many, like Hazael, are ready at the first suggestion of sin to cry, "What! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" and yet, but a few days or years at best, and like him he stands before the world a monster of iniquity.

How highly blessed are they, beloved, who early learn the lesson of our own utter weakness, and the secret of the believer's strength. Blessed is that Christian who, with the humility and confiding trustfulness of the little child, places his hand in that of his heavenly Father, content to be led by Him through life's journey, to be supported by His strong arm when the way is rough and thorny, and to be carried in His bosom when all is dark and he can no longer see his way. Such an one can say with St. Paul, and say it with a full knowledge of the blessedness of its truth, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

"Strong in Thy strength, though in myself but weakness,  
Equal to all I know that I shall be,  
If I can seize the mantle of Thy meekness,  
And wrap it round my soul, blest Lord, like Thee.

"I will not waste one breath of life in sighing,  
For other ends has life been given to me—  
Duties and self-devotion, daily dying  
Into a higher, better life, dear Lord, with Thee."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

NOON.

"Keep us—from all adversities which may happen to the body."—*Collect.*



AM fearfully and wonderfully made," said the Psalmist, and who that has paid the least attention to that wonderful piece of mechanism, the human frame, but will echo his words? Flavel writes: "If a small pin be taken out of the frame of a watch, and placed anywhere else, the motion is either presently stopped or made irregular; and as Galen observes of the curious fabric of the human body, that, if the greatest naturalists should study an hundred years to find out a more commodious situation or configuration of any part thereof, it could never be done." Well may we pray that our bodies may be kept from adversities. For every ill that happens to us outwardly is carried by the swift, telegraphic nerves to the soul, and causes disquiet there. But pain, disease, and even death, are not the only nor the greatest adversities that may happen to the body. He who yields his "members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," brings upon his frame worse evils than these. "What!" says the Apostle, "know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?"

And shall we profane this temple of God in the service of Satan ? “ Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are ? ”

Nor are these evil consequences removed at death. This wonderful fabric, which death destroys, is again to be rebuilt, with infinitely increased capacities for joy or sorrow, and again to become the habitation of an immortal soul ; to share with it the unending felicities of heaven, or the unutterable woes of hell. Shall we not, then, earnestly pray that our bodies may be delivered from the service of sin ?

But there are adversities which God sends upon us in love. Sickness, pain, and deformity, are often made by Him “ means and instruments of our salvation.” Thorns in the flesh they may seem to us here, yet when we look back upon them from the heights of heaven, while we bless God for all His mercies, we will bless Him above all for our “ adversities.” Let us not dread them so much, beloved, but even while we pray against them let us say, “ Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.”

“ Though in health, with powers unwasted,  
And with willing hearts, we hasted  
To take up our Saviour's cross ;  
If, through trial, our good Master  
Should refine these powers the faster,  
What good Christian counts it loss ? ”

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

### EVENING

“Keep us—from all evil thoughts.”—*Collect.*



OUR whole being rises up in fear and dread of bodily adversity; but there is a far greater foe to our happiness to which we often pay too little heed. The city may be besieged on all sides, and yet hold out to the end, if the garrison be all loyal; but woe to that city if there are traitors within its gates! Evil thoughts are these traitors in the citadel of the heart.

Subtle thought! quicker and more intangible than the lightning's flash, and sometimes more blasting! How many would give all they possess, could they but rid themselves of the evil memories that already throng, like avenging demons, around their souls!

Thoughts are the germs of action. “As he thinketh in his heart so is he,” said Solomon. “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,” said One greater than Solomon; and immediately after He enumerates the evil acts which result as their bitter fruits: “Murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”

No one will deny that our actions are greatly influenced by our feelings. He who habitually indulges in envious, revengeful, or impure thoughts, does not need a very strong temptation to manifest

them in overt acts. While on the other hand, he who constantly cherishes thoughts of purity and love, will equally manifest their influence in his daily life. Thus are the secrets of the heart made manifest to some extent even in this life. But only to some extent. The heart that revels in sin and gloats over impurity, that is filled with pride and inflated with vanity, may cover itself with the mask of virtue and humility. The restraints of public opinion may keep it from many acts of sin on which it loves to meditate in secret. But before Him “unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid,” all such disguises are vain. “For the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imagination of the thoughts.”

Let us then carefully follow the admonition of the Apostle by “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” Though we can not always prevent unholy imaginations from springing up in the evil soil of our hearts, yet we need not *cherish* them. If we thus guard our hearts, we will have very little occasion to guard our lives.

“Oh ! for a lowly, contrite heart,  
Believing, true, and clean ;  
Which neither life nor death can part  
From Him that dwells within !  
A heart in every thought renewed,  
And full of love divine ;  
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good—  
A copy, Lord, of Thine.”



"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## MONDAY MORNING.

"We beseech you by the Lord Jesus."—*Epistle.*



WHEN the Lord Jesus was baptized, He entered into a formal covenant with His Church, by which He became its acknowledged head, a position which He has never for a moment renounced. "Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am," was His plain declaration just before His death, when to human appearance all His assumptions were to have a disgraceful overthrow. And after His resurrection, when He gave His disciples His parting commands, this idea of His headship over the Church is the one kept most prominently before them. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo! *I am with you alway*, even unto the end of the world."

And in this spirit did the Apostles always act. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus, the Lord;" "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ;" "Head over all things to the Church, which is his body." Yes, beloved, this body of Christ is pervaded by His presence now. Never

for a moment has He lost sight of it, never for a moment will He desert it. When we enter into the sanctuary, Christ is there. When we listen to His "ambassadors," it is He, beseeching us by their mouth. When we gather around His table, it is He who through His servant speaks, "This do in remembrance of me."

Is there a Church which calls itself the Church of Christ, but does not yield to His authority? which baptizes in His name, but does not teach its members to observe *all things which He has commanded*? None such can claim His promise, "Lo, I am with you alway!" It is but a dead corpse, from which the life-giving principle has departed, and which is doomed to corruption and decay.

Beloved, are we acting by the authority of the Lord Jesus? Are we striving to mould our lives by His commands? Are we appealing to Him for direction, in all cases of difficulty? Then shall we, too, realize the promise, "Lo, I am with you," while we sojourn here, and at last attain that "eternal salvation" which He has promised "unto all them that obey him."


"Lamb of God, Thy lowly name,  
King of kings, we Thee proclaim;  
Heaven and earth shall hear its fame.

"Mighty King of Righteousness,  
King of Glory, King of Peace,  
Never shall Thy kingdom cease."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## MONDAY EVENING.

"Abound more and more."—*Epistle.*

ROWTH is the law of life, in the spiritual as well as in the natural world. The very instant the Christian thinks he has made sufficient progress in the divine life, that instant he begins to decline. "Giving all diligence," says St. Peter, "*add* to your faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and *abound*, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And our beloved Church teaches the same great truth. Recall the time when in the solemn rite of confirmation you renewed your baptismal vows; when the Bishop, as you knelt before him, laid his hand in blessing on your head, and prayed, "Defend, O Lord, this Thy servant with Thy heavenly grace, that he may continue Thine forever, and *daily increase* in Thy Holy Spirit *more and more*, until he come unto Thy everlasting kingdom."

Such, too, was the constant teaching of Christ Himself. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch

that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth *more fruit*." The vine is not a stately tree, supporting itself, and spreading out its broad branches to shelter and protect others ; neither is it beautiful to look upon, or of much value in the arts. "What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest ? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work ?" Its one great purpose is to bear fruit. How appropriate, then, is this comparison, by which Jesus likens the Christian to a vine. To bear "much fruit"—this is the special purpose of every Christian life.


Let us endeavor then, not only at this season, when we are especially called to prove our love to Jesus, but at all times, to show forth your faith by your works. We have no warrant, otherwise, to call ourselves God's children. Let it be your constant endeavor "that your love may *abound more and more* in knowledge and in all judgment ; that ye may approve things that are excellent ; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ ; being *filled with the fruits of righteousness* which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

"Work, work ! nor covet an ignoble rest ;  
Allow no sloth thy spirit to beguile ;  
Those love the Saviour most who serve Him best,  
And he who blesses others shall be blessed  
With the full sunshine of his Saviour's smile."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## TUESDAY MORNING.

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification."—*Epistle.*

TYMOLOGISTS tell us that *holy* and *healthy* are words very near of kin, having a common origin. How strikingly does this bring before our minds, beloved, that the normal condition of man is a state of holiness! "God made man upright." Sin is a disease which has infected the soul, and which must be removed ere it can attain a healthy, that is, a holy condition. Every advance, therefore, in the path of holiness is an advance toward spiritual health. Every step in the way of sin is an increase of disease.

Let us contemplate for a moment the holiness of heaven, and thus learn the character of that principle which we are to seek. The very essence of angelic life is *perfect love* and *perfect obedience*. Their whole being is pervaded by the most intense love of God, and their wills so entirely surrendered to His, that their highest joy is to fulfill His commands. "If an angel was to descend upon the earth," we are told by John Newton, "and was to be asked whether he would serve God as a street-cleaner or an emperor, he would resign himself with indifference to either, so that serving God was to be really his lot."

But holiness is more even than perfect love and

obedience. It includes *hatred of sin*. Sin and holiness—most bitter, most implacable enemies—can never reign in the same heart. They wage war against each other to the death, and allow no truce in the conflict. And does not God proclaim it, as a peculiar characteristic of His own holiness, that He sets His face against sin? Does He not declare death to be the penalty of every transgression? Has He not given us terrible evidence of His hatred of it in the deluge, and the destruction of the cities of the plain? And is not His command to us, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”?

But does the reader ask, Is it possible for us to be sanctified, who, without God’s grace, can not stand upright for a moment? Absolute holiness is doubtless beyond our reach, yet a measure of it is certainly attainable. Let us, then, take Christ as our example, and constantly seek to mould our lives by that perfect pattern, knowing that though, through the frailty of our mortal nature, we can never reach the measure of that perfect standard, yet every earnest effort will bring us nearer to it.

“ Oh ! how the thought of God attracts,  
And draws the heart from earth,  
And sickens it of passing shows  
And dissipating mirth.


“ God only is the creature’s home,  
Though long and rough the road ;  
Yet nothing less can satisfy  
The love that longs for God.”

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## TUESDAY EVENING.

"God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness."

*Epistle.*

N our meditation this morning we considered holiness or sanctification as to its nature and necessity. Let us this evening dwell for a few moments on the means of its attainment. The justification of the soul is an instantaneous work. The moment faith in the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is exercised the soul passes from death to life. But sanctification is a gradual work, calling forth all the powers and energies of the soul, throughout the whole life. It is the process of education, by which the Holy Spirit, as the great Teacher, gradually moulds it into a meetness for the kingdom of God.

"Pray that you may be sanctified," said an eminent Christian, "even though the Lord should see fit to send great suffering in answer to your prayer." And what is the usual method which God employs in the sanctification of His people? "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver. I have chosen thee in *the furnace of affliction*." "For it became him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the *Captain* of their salvation *perfect*

*through suffering.*" And shall our Blessed Lord, for our sakes, drink this bitter cup, and we shrink from the draught?

Let us, then, beloved, earnestly pray for this blessing of holiness, leaving it to the wisdom of God to use such means for its attainment as seem best in His sight. Does He chasten us? It is "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." If the Lord loveth whom He chasteneth, beloved, would you be forgotten? Will you not rather "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings"?

You say, perhaps, The spirit is willing, but the flesh is very, very weak. I desire to be holy, but afflictions, shame, reproach, and loss are very hard to bear. Then remember that "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." "He doth not afflict willingly." Give yourself, then, into His hands. Be not afraid. If He places you in the fire, His watchful eye will never lose sight of you, and when the refining process is completed, you shall come forth as pure gold, bearing the image of your King.


"Pain's furnace heat within me quivers,  
God's breath upon the flame doth blow,  
And all my heart in anguish shivers,  
And trembles at the fiery glow.  
And yet I whisper, As God will!  
And in the hottest fire hold still."



“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## WEDNESDAY MORNING.

“He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God.”—*Epistle.*

HE ambassador of a king goes to a foreign land. He takes up his residence there as the representative of his sovereign, to support his dignity and maintain his rights. Is he treated with contempt? He need not avenge himself. It is not he, but his sovereign who is insulted; and he will bring the whole power of his royal authority, backed if necessary by armies and fleets, rather than the wrong shall go unpunished. Hence we may learn the solemnity of the Apostle's warning. God's ministers and God's Word are sent into a lost and ruined world, alienated from Him by sin, to speak for Him, and woe to that soul that despises the messenger or treats the message with contempt.

Can it be that any who profess to reverence God and His Word can be classed as despisers? Can any who have taken their stand before the world as the disciples of Christ, who attend His courts, who call themselves by His name, who gather round His table, be called despisers? Ah! this is the saddest part of all, that Christ is often wounded in the house of His friends. May not each one of us ask the question, “Lord, is it I?”

We are despisers, beloved, if we bring God's religion into contempt before the world by showing that it has not the power to make us happy and holy. Christ makes very great and precious promises in His Word. He assures those who come to Him that they shall not only be delivered from the condemnation of sin hereafter, but also from its dominion here, and that they shall be the possessors of a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. Now, if we still find our pleasure in sin, if we still hanker after those follies and frivolities which we once promised to renounce ; if a rainy day, or a slight indisposition, or a poor preacher is sufficient plea for a vacant seat in God's house, while we allow no such excuse to keep us away from worldly gayety ; if, in short, we show that we have not found religion's ways pleasantness and her paths peace, but are still wedded to the world, what will that world, what will our own consciences, what will our God pronounce us but despisers of "His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering" ?

"The deaf may hear the Saviour's voice,  
The fettered tongue its chain may break ;  
But the deaf heart, the dumb by choice,  
The laggard soul that will not wake,  
The guilt that scorns to be forgiven —  
These baffle e'en the spells of heaven."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## WEDNESDAY EVENING.

“Who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit.”—*Epistle.*



WHEN our Blessed Lord was seeking to awaken in the minds of His disciples a just sense of God's love to them, He directed their attention to the affection which an earthly parent bears to his child, and then points His illustration by adding, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much more* shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

Our Saviour instances this gift of the Holy Ghost as a special proof of God's love; and is it not so? What this natural world would be without the light and heat of the sun, such would the spiritual world be without the influences of the Spirit. Not a ray of heavenly light would reach our darkened minds, not a word of comfort would fall upon a sinner's ears. Even the cross of Christ would have been reared in vain. For we would have had no Bible without the Holy Ghost, and the story of Christ crucified would soon have become misty tradition; too good, too wonderful in itself, and too much encumbered with human additions and inventions to afford any ground whatever for faith or hope to rest upon.

But we owe more to the Holy Spirit than even the gift of God's Word. Unless He condescends to come into our hearts, and work there, quickening and enlightening these souls "dead in trespasses and sins," and showing us our need of that Saviour which the Gospel proclaims; unless He not only gives us the Bible, but by His powerful influences on our hearts shows us its entire adaptedness to our needs, the Christ which its pages reveal will be to us but a mere historic character, in whose life and death we have no personal interest and fellowship.

But He does more even than this. He fills the heart with such desire for Jesus that nothing less can any longer satisfy its cravings. "Oh! that I knew where I might find him!" is now its language. "He is the chiefest among ten thousand; yea, he is altogether lovely." Well then might St. Paul utter in behalf of his Ephesian converts that noble prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit, (Eph. 3:14-19;) and well may we, beloved, repeat it for ourselves whenever we bow before the throne of grace.

"Come, gracious Spirit, heavenly Dove,  
With light and comfort from above;  
Be Thou our Guardian, Thou our Guide,  
O'er every thought and step preside.

"Lead us to holiness—the road  
That we must take to dwell with God;  
Lead us to Christ, the living Way,  
Nor let us from His precepts stray."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## THURSDAY MORNING.

"Jesus departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon."—*Gospel.*



ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for instruction in righteousness." And the story of the "Woman of Canaan" is one of those portions which the Christian Church would be the least willing to lose. How many breaking hearts has she not comforted! How many, well nigh ready utterly to despair, has she not encouraged to hold on! There is, perhaps, not a single Christian who has not been strengthened at some time by this simple story of triumphant faith, so that she has become an example to all that believe. When we tread the courts of heaven, and amid the blood-bought throng recognize those "of whom the world was not worthy," and thank them for their bright examples, methinks this woman shall be sought for as one to whom we are greatly indebted.

There is one most touching thought in this narrative connected with our Saviour which the careless reader of the Bible will be apt to miss. In carefully examining the history of this long and tedious journey, from Capernaum to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, we find no other manifestation of Jesus' power than this. This woman's cry of agony had

been borne to the ear of infinite compassion, and He instantly started for her relief. What an exquisite illustration does Christ here give us of His own parable. As the Good Shepherd, He leaveth the ninety and nine, and goeth forth seeking His lost sheep. She, absorbed by her child's calamity, knows nothing of His coming; nothing of His gracious thoughts toward her; nothing of the rich blessing He is bringing to her afflicted child.

Oh! very precious in its teachings, beloved, is this lesson. If Jesus, when He was on earth, thus sought out the miserable and unhappy, and supplied their needs, even at such cost to Himself, now that He is in heaven, can any be too obscure for His omniscient eye to see, or too wretched for His power to reach? Why, then, should we be cast down? Let us cast off these guilty doubts and fears, which act with such benumbing influence upon the soul, and learn in every event of life to trust to the love of Jesus. "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

"God liveth ever!

Wherefore, soul, despair thou never!

Our God is good, in every place

His love is known, His help is found;

His mighty arm and tender grace

Bring good from ills that hem us round.

Easier than we think can He

Turn to joy our agony;

Soul, remember, 'mid thy pains,

God o'er all forever reigns."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## THURSDAY EVENING.

"Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David."—*Gospel.*



HIS was a wonderful address, coming from such a source. What did this woman, living in a remote section of the country, surrounded by the darkness of heathenism, know of Christ? Had His fame preceded Him into that region and told a true report of His nature and office? Or had she a knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, and learned from them to look for the Messiah of the Jews, and to recognize Him in the person of this plain, unassuming man? We do not know. It is one of those mysteries which the Holy Spirit has not seen proper to reveal. Yet, nevertheless, we can not but wonder that one with so few advantages should so far surpass in just estimation of the Saviour's character the profound Rabbis of the Jews. She addressed Him by the title, peculiar to the Messiah, "Thou Son of David," and as the Messiah, not as a great physician, she makes her prayer to Him.

"Have mercy on me! My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." She goes into no minutiae of the disease, she describes no symptoms, she offers no reward. But she comes as a beggar, making her misery her only plea. She has doubtless tried other

means of relief for her child. Like the woman who was cured by touching the Saviour's garment, she had probably "suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had," while her daughter "was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse;" and like her, too, when other helpers failed, she came to Jesus.

Are we like this woman of Canaan, beloved? We have been, if we are not now, "grievously vexed with a devil." Satan has exercised his sway over us, and led us blindfold at his will. Have we, too, gone to Jesus with the earnest cry, "Lord, have mercy upon *me*"? Like her, we have nothing to offer. The blessing of salvation cost the precious life of the Son of God. What price could buy it? Not the whole world, not ten thousand worlds, would equal in value a single drop. But, unlike this woman, we have Christ's own invitation to approach Him, and the assurance from His own lips that He will cast out none that come. O beloved! if we are found among the faithless at the last, will not this woman stand forth in condemnation against us?

"Could the creatures help or ease us,  
Seldom should we think of prayer;  
Few, if any, come to Jesus  
Till reduced to self-despair;  
Long we either slight or doubt Him,  
But when all the means we try  
Prove we can not do without Him,  
Then, at last, to Him we cry."



"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## FRIDAY MORNING.

"He answered her not a word."—*Gospel.*



OUR meditation this morning leads us to view "the Woman of Canaan," an apparently unwelcome suppliant at the Saviour's feet. To all her agonizing entreaties He turns a deaf ear. The tears may fall from her eyes like rain, but He notices them not. Where, in the whole history of our Lord, have we a case parallel with this? Was He grieved that she had intruded on His privacy? for St. Mark tells us that "He entered into a house, and would have no man know it." But when, on another occasion, He "withdrew himself" for a time from public notice, we are told that "great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all." Was it the woman's unworthiness? The rest of the narrative forbids the thought. Yet even that would be insufficient to account for Jesus' silence. "Were there not ten cleansed; but where are the nine? There are none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." Here we learn that even ingratitude, that basest of crimes, did not prevent the Saviour from exercising His work of mercy on the bodies of men. Some tell us that our Lord was anxious not to give offense to the Jews, by being as

liberal in His favors to the Gentiles as to them ; and that He had Himself said to His disciples, " Go not into the way of the Gentiles."

But " Christ treated her thus to try her ; He knew the strength of her faith ; He therefore met her with discouragements, that the trial of her faith might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory. This was like God's tempting Abraham ; or the angel's wrestling with Jacob, only to put him on wrestling. Many of the methods of God's providence, and especially of His grace in dealing with His people, which are dark and perplexing, may be explained with the key of this story ; which is for that end left on record, to teach us that there may be love in Christ's heart while there are frowns in His face ; and to encourage us, therefore, though He slay us, yet to trust in Him."

Let us not then supinely yield to despondency, but be quickened by the example of such faith, when we feel disposed to exclaim, " Will the Lord cast off forever ? And will he be favorable no more ? Is his mercy clean gone forever ? Doth his promise fail for evermore ?"

" Fear not then, distressed believer,  
Venture on His mighty name ;  
He is able to deliver,  
And His love is still the same.  
Can His pity or His power  
Suffer thee to pray in vain ?  
Wait but His appointed hour,  
And thy suit thou shalt obtain."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## FRIDAY EVENING.

"Send her away, for she crieth after us."—*Gospel.*



THESE words show us that the Apostles had not yet gained that pitying tenderness for the afflicted which filled their Master's breast. Taking the silence of the Lord as equivalent to a denial of the woman's request, and annoyed at her importunity, they urge Christ to "send her away." There is no reason for believing that the disciples were more compassionate than their Master appeared to be, as some would have us believe, and that they urged Him to *heal her daughter* and send her away. The whole turn of their words is against this idea. "Send her away; *for she crieth after us.*" It was not the woman's good they sought, but the gratification of their own selfish ease and blind prejudice. It is most probable that their Jewish prejudices were aroused at the petition of this "woman of Canaan," and that they were unwilling she should share in the blessing which had come to the house of Israel. We know that even after the Saviour had plainly told His disciples that the Gentiles were to be fellow-heirs with the Jews, even after the pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit had taken place, it still needed a special, miraculous manifestation to prove

this truth to Peter ; and the equality of Jew and Gentile in the Gospel was one of the greatest stumbling-blocks to the minds of the Jewish converts. How natural, then, that this feeling should show itself in this early period of the Apostles' experience, when they had as yet learned so few of the truths belonging to the kingdom of heaven.

What cautionary and instructive lessons can we glean from this mistake of the disciples? A very important warning against allowing ourselves to be blinded by the mists of prejudice and pride. "God hath made of one blood all nations of men." "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." Do we not sometimes run the risk of incurring God's displeasure, because we allow ourselves to look down with contempt on those who differ from ourselves, forgetting who it is that has made us to differ? Let us examine and see if this sin exists in our hearts ; and let us learn to love and honor the image of Christ when we find it, however mean or lowly the exterior man may be. If Christ has chosen that soul as the object of His love, we dare not scorn it.

" Sing we the song of those who stand  
Around the eternal throne ;  
Of every kindred, clime, and land,  
A multitude unknown.

" Life's poor distinctions vanish here—  
To-day, the young, the old ;  
Our Saviour and His flock appear  
One Shepherd and one fold."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## SATURDAY MORNING.

"Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."—*Gospel.*



HE unsympathizing request of the disciples caused their Lord to speak, and yet at first He seemed to side with them. He saw the feelings of prejudice which were in their hearts, and, as though He appreciated and shared them, He turned to the woman and said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Alas! what is she now to do? Must she take up again that heavy burden of grief which she had laid at Jesus' feet, and return with it to her house where Satan reigned with unrebuked authority? No! she had appealed to the Messiah, and she could not believe that He, in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed, would indeed cast out her prayer. She fell at His feet and "worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me." Can He resist longer? Yes, He must teach His disciples a lesson by this woman's faith that they are never to forget. He who searches the heart knew that she could stand the test. He appears to argue against her. "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." "This was exceedingly severe, yet it struck her ears less harshly than it strikes ours.

She knew that in comparing the Jews to the children of God's family, and the heathen to the dogs without, He simply used the comparison and statement, common among His people, as expressing the relation between them, without meaning to give personal offense; just as at present a Moslem will call one 'an infidel' to his face without meaning to be personally offensive or even uncivil."

This new repulse would have been to almost any one else the knell of all hope. But here was one who would not be denied. "Truth, Lord!" I am willing to acknowledge myself a dog. I know I am unworthy of the children's bread. "Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."

When we gather lovingly round the table of this same Lord Jesus Christ, to eat the children's bread, and confess "We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table," is that Lord able to recognize in us the same humility and faith which characterized the "Woman of Canaan"?

"Yet although from Canaan sprung,  
Though herself a dog she styled,  
She had Israel's faith and tongue,  
And was owned for Abraham's child.

"From His word she draws a plea:  
'Though unworthy children's bread,  
'Tis enough for one like me  
If with crumbs I may be fed.'"

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me"

## SATURDAY EVENING.

"O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."—*Gospel.*



IN our meditations we have followed this woman step by step. We have seen the compassionate Saviour going on His far journey after His lost sheep. We have seen her application for relief, our Lord's constrained silence, the want of sympathy in the disciples, Jesus arguing against her, and we have seen her, with an earnestness that could not be denied, turning His very arguments into pleas in her behalf by the wonderful alchemy of her strong faith. And to-night we are to consider for a moment her glorious reward.

"O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Have we not here a fresh likeness to wrestling Jacob? "I will not let thee go except thou bless me!" was the reply of this strong son of faith. And what was his reward? "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, (that is, a prince of God,) for as a prince hast thou power with God, and hast prevailed." And her princely faith procured a similar blessing. "For a small moment" did Jesus seem to forsake her, "but with everlasting kindness" did He have mercy upon her. Can we contemplate this account and not feel a glow

of enthusiasm warm our hearts at the grand *denouement*? Who apparently so hopelessly beset with obstacles at the outset? Who more gloriously triumphant over them at the close?

“Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.” Jesus can now refuse her nothing. It is as though He had opened the stores of His omnipotence before her and bid her choose what she would.

Are you tempted in anywise like this woman? Have you laid a burden at the Saviour’s feet, and does He appear to turn a deaf ear to all your prayers? It is only in appearance. He is testing you as He tested her. Remember that *faith has power with God*, and, taking her example as your guide, leave your burden there and fall yourself before Him, crying, “Lord, help *me*!” God’s word is pledged that if, with the holy persistency of faith you plead, “I will not let thee go until thou bless *me*,” the blessing will most certainly come. We can not weary God by earnest prayer, but we often miss the blessing by growing weary of asking for it.

“What though my shrinking flesh complain  
And murmur to contend so long?  
I rise superior to my pain;  
When I am weak, then I am strong.  
And when my all of strength shall fail  
I shall with the God-man prevail.”



"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

MORNING.

"Hearty Desires."—*Collect.*



IN religion, as in worldly pursuits, a whole-hearted devotion is necessary to success. He whose spirit has been remoulded by the Holy Ghost, who now loves the things which God commands, and desires that which He promises, and who is willing to count all things in which he formerly delighted "loss for Christ," will press on, in the divine life, with a holy earnestness and zeal that can not be turned aside by any of the pleasing baits of ill. Such an one preëminently was St. Paul. Read Phil. 3, and there learn how "hearty" were the desires with which his soul stretched itself toward God. "Let us walk by the same rule; let us mind the same thing."

"How good is God," says Bishop Wilson, "who will not only give us what we pray for, but will reward us for going to Him and laying our wants before Him!" Is there any wish which we are cherishing that we dare not bring before God? That alone proves its unlawfulness. Is there any thing which greatly moves us, but which we think

too small, too insignificant, to be worthy of His attention? There is nothing that interests His children which has not power to touch the heart of our Father in heaven. Many, very many desires fill our breasts, and very "hearty" ones they often are, essential, we are apt to think, to our happiness and success in this present life. Let us carry them all to God. In His infinite wisdom He may see that the gratification of these desires would be injurious to our true interests. Then in His very love for us, He will deny us. And would you not have it so? Would you not rather submissively trust every thing to God than be left to direct your own blind way? Nowhere can you find better advice than is given us by that quaint old writer, Quarles: "Wouldst thou know the lawfulness of the action which thou desirest to undertake, let thy devotion recommend it to divine blessing. If it be lawful, thou shalt perceive thy heart to be encouraged by thy prayer; if unlawful, thou shalt find thy prayer discouraged by thy heart."

" 'Tis prayer supports the soul that's weak,  
Though thought be broken, language lame;  
Pray if thou canst or canst not speak,  
But pray with faith in Jesus' name.


" Depend on Him! thou canst not fail;  
Make all thy wants and wishes known;  
Fear not, His merits must prevail!  
Ask what thou wilt, it shall be done."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

NOON.

"The right hand of Thy Majesty."—*Collect.*

T is said that a missionary was once trying to impress on the mind of a heathen king some correct idea of the deity. "Show me your God," said the monarch. The missionary brought him forth at noonday, and bade him look upward. "I can not," said the king; "the brightness of the sun dazzles and blinds me." Said the missionary, "This orb of day is but the creature and the messenger of God. If you can not gaze upon it, how would you be overwhelmed were He Himself to appear before you?"

Such desires are not new to the heart of man. Even Moses prayed, "Show me thy glory." But God mercifully denied his request: "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live." Yet not wholly did He deny him: "I will make all my *goodness* pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee." (Ex. 34 : 6, 7.)

Let us meditate more frequently upon the majesty of God. The thought of Him makes all the petty distinctions of earth sink into utter worthlessness.

If our souls are thus trained to look beyond "the transient and minute," we will break loose from these toils of vanity which drag us down to earth. Gazing thus upon Him with the eye of faith, holy aspirations will fill our hearts, and we will seek, in our own weak way, to copy Him; so that, as the Apostle says, "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Yet a day is coming when we shall see God face to face; when before the great white throne we must take our stand for judgment, and the eye of God shall look us through and through. Then the right hand of His majesty will find out all that hate Him. "He will not spare in the day of vengeance."

There is but one hiding-place that can shield the guilty soul—the cross of Christ; but one Advocate, who, when heaven and earth shall be dissolved, will dare to stand forth for the sinner's help. It is the Crucified. Is that hiding-place—that Advocate yours?

"Before me place in dread array  
The pomp of that tremendous day  
When Thou, with clouds, shalt come  
To judge the nations at Thy bar;  
And tell me, Lord, shall I be there  
To meet a joyful doom?"

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

EVENING.

"Be our defense."—*Collect.*



O the tried and tempted Christian the thought of God as a "defense" is one of peculiar preciousness. It is interesting to notice how continually David speaks of Him in this light. "Be thou my strong Rock, for an house of defense to save me." "The Rock of my strength, and my Refuge." "A strong Tower." Such are some of the images which the tried warrior used to signify his sense of God's protecting care. And who had put it more fully to the proof? Did he triumph over the lion and the bear when they sought to devour the lambs of his flock? Did his right arm whirl the sling with unerring aim, and lay the haughty Philistine in the dust? Was he successfully hidden from Saul, time and again, and for long years protected against all his machinations? And, finally, was he sustained in his authority even when his own son rebelled against him? Never does he for a moment attribute any victory or any praise to himself. It is always God. "Blessed is the man who maketh the Lord his trust." "Some trust in chariots and

some in horses ; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." " Mine eyes are ever turned toward the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the net."

And the great Christian warrior, St. Paul, does battle in the same strength. " All men forsook me. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom."

What greater encouragement can we desire than such examples, coupled with the innumerable promises of God's word ? " If God be for us, who can be against us ?" And as the strength of a human father would be put forth most promptly to defend the feeblest child, so will the power of our Lord be interposed to shield His weakest one from harm. Every soul that has entered into covenant with God through the blood of Jesus shall find by his own blessed experience that " the name of the Lord is a strong tower : the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

" How are Thy servants blessed, O Lord !  
How sure is their defense !  
Eternal wisdom is their guide,  
Their help, Omnipotence.

" In midst of dangers, fears, and deaths,  
Thy goodness we'll adore ;  
We'll praise Thee for Thy mercies past,  
And humbly hope for more."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## MONDAY MORNING.

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.”

*Epistle.*



THE term “*followers*” in this place signifies *imitators*, so that the direction of the Apostle is, “Be ye *imitators* of God, as dear children.” He gives us in these few words the whole secret of practical religion. It consists in imitating God. As “dear children” will look up to their parents with reverence and love, respecting their authority, desiring their society above all others, and making it their highest ambition in all things to follow them, so the Apostle places us under the same obligations with respect to God.

We are to “walk in love.” Our heavenly Father here sets us an example which, alas! we are slow to follow. God’s love is continually exercising itself in offices of mercy and grace toward all His creatures. This beautiful world, with its flower-gemmed earth and its canopy of stars; these wonderful faculties by which we enjoy His gifts; and the presence of abiding law, which assures us of the perpetuity of our enjoyment, are all proofs of His exceeding

love. But the greatest and best of all is His gift of Christ and heaven.

Not only to those who serve and follow Him is this grace shown. Even those who openly defy His laws, and have no thought of Him in their hearts, are sharers in His blessings. "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

"As Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us." Here we are presented with our model. If, then, we would be imitators of God, we must manifest in our conduct toward others the same generous, self-sacrificing love that Christ has shown toward us. Not blessing with its influences only those that love us, but the wicked, the ungrateful, the injurious; hoping for no reward but that richest and most precious one of all, "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost."

"Be faithful in thy love!  
See the love God has for thee!  
Love thy neighbor, even when he  
Lays more cares, thy cares above.  
Think how Jesus prayed for those  
By whose hands His cross arose!  
Even as God doth thee forgive,  
So let mercy in thee live."



• He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.

## MONDAY EVENING.

“Not convenient.”—*Epistle.*

**B**Y this expression, St. Paul means us to understand practices which are unbecoming to the Christian profession. He specifies not only the grosser vices to which the heathen of his time were peculiarly addicted, but which we may hope and believe are banished from the Church of Christ; but he also condemns sins of the tongue, which, alas! are too common even among “those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s religion.”

Nothing is more true than that our words are the offspring of our hearts. Are there those who delight in talking of impurity, on whose cheeks the *double entendre* brings no blush, who greet the corrupt jest with a ready laugh? They are “whited sepulchres.” Shun such as friends and companions. For as we can not take a coal in our hands without being smutted with its blackness, neither can we hear or repeat the language of defilement without an indelible stain being imprinted on our minds.

But while we may hope that there are very few professing to be the servants of God, who would dishonor Him and disgrace themselves by such foulness of mouth, there are very many whose conver-

sation is characterized by frivolity and foolish jesting, while their lips are never opened in "giving of thanks." It is the latter that would suffuse their cheeks with blushes if they were detected in it, not the former.

We are not called upon to suppose that St. Paul means to condemn harmless mirth, which, like the merry laugh, seems to spring spontaneously from a happy heart, and communicates the pleasant contagion to all around. But we may be sure that he did include, under the heads of "foolish talking" and "jesting," all that could not be strictly proved to be thus innocent in its character.

Let us resolve with Bishop Wilson, "May I never hear, never repeat with pleasure, such things as may dishonor God, hurt my own character, or injure my neighbor;" and may our daily prayer be, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

"Words are mighty, words are living;  
Serpents with their venom'd stings,  
Or bright angels crowding round us,  
With heaven's light upon their wings.  
Every word has its own spirit,  
True or false, that never dies;  
Every word men's lips have uttered  
Lives on record in the skies."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## TUESDAY MORNING.

"Let no man deceive you with vain words."—*Epistle.*



ESTERDAY we were earnestly considering the necessity of guarding our speech from every thing "not convenient," that is, unworthy of our "high calling" in Christ. To-day we are to look at the subject of "vain words" in another light. The Apostle is warning the Ephesian converts against evil teachers who abounded in the Church even in his day, and who sought to lead them away from the truth as it is in Jesus. If such cautions were necessary in what we are accustomed to consider the purest days of the Church, when the Apostles themselves preached and directed all its affairs, how much more is it needed now, when errors of every form have arisen, each asserting its claim to reception and obedience.

Some will tell us—and the sophistry deceives very many—that it is no difference what a man believes, if only he holds his faith in an honest and sincere heart. Perhaps this may be true in lands on which a ray of gospel light has never shone, where the nations are still sitting in darkness and the shadow of death; but in no sense is it true in a land of gospel light and liberty. We are responsible to God for our *belief* as much as for our actions. Else

why should He give us a law and rule of life? Why should He have inspired holy men to set forth His will, if it makes no difference whether we obey Him or not? And why should He have given us His Holy Spirit, to lead our minds into the way of truth, if we may follow another way and yet be innocent? No! it is not a matter of indifference what you believe; and he who would persuade you otherwise is deceiving you with "vain words." "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Beware then of "vain words," lest they form a snare for your soul! "Lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." He who diligently searches the word of God, in humble dependence on the teachings of the Spirit of God, is the only one who has any right to expect to be guided "into all truth."

"In vain we seek for peace with God,  
By methods of our own;  
Jesus, there's nothing but Thy blood  
Can bring us near the throne.

"'Tis by Thy death we live, O Lord!  
'Tis on Thy Cross we rest;  
Forever be Thy name adored,  
Thy name forever blest."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## TUESDAY EVENING.

"Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."—*Epistle.*



WITH what unerring certainty did the finger of God point out the guilty Achan! At the command of Joshua he came forth with the thousands of Israel to the judgment of the Lord as though defying detection. Alone and unobserved he had committed the act. Who could accuse him? There was not a single witness to appear against him. But when earth is silent, heaven will speak. One by one the lots were cast before the Lord, for the tribe, for the family, for the household, for the *man*; and Achan stood in the presence of that mighty host, convicted by the Lord of having brought a curse upon his people by disobeying the commandment of Jehovah.

In the face of this fearful example, man still acts the part of Achan, vainly hoping to continue in sin, and yet elude the vengeance of God. But as surely as he was unmasked and brought to punishment, so surely shall each child of disobedience stand revealed in the presence of the eternal Judge.

*There is nothing so terrible in the whole universe as the "wrath of God."* Its lightning flash leaves the soul a scathed and blasted ruin—an eternal monument of the folly and wickedness of sin.

As yet the cross of Christ is upreared, to conduct God's wrath from our guilty souls; and he who seeks in it a refuge shall most surely escape when the storm of Jêhovah's vengeance falls upon a guilty world. But when the great white throne takes the place of the cross, when He who once hung upon the latter as our sacrifice takes His seat upon the former as our Judge, what shall become of those who despised His sufferings in their behalf and refused to yield to His authority as their King? "What, then, shall I do when God riseth up; and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?"

"The day of wrath! that dreadful day  
When heaven and earth shall pass away!  
What power shall be the sinner's stay?  
How shall he meet that dreadful day?"

"Oh! on that day, that wrathful day,  
When man to judgment wakes from clay,  
Be Thou, O Christ! the sinner's stay,  
Though heaven and earth shall pass away."<sup>9</sup>

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## WEDNESDAY MORNING.

“Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord : walk as children of light.”—*Epistle*.

**D**ARKNESS and light, the two antipodes in the natural world, are not more unlike than the two states of the soul, which the inspired writers typify by them. Darkness is a favorite image used to illustrate our condition out of Christ. The evil man “walks in the ways of darkness ;” like the lost and benighted traveller, “darkness hath blinded his eyes,” so that he is unable to discern his true path or the dangers that surround him on every hand. He is a subject of the “prince of darkness ;” and as such he yields his “members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity,” while his “wages is death” —“the blackness of darkness forever.” What a melancholy picture ! And yet the word of God declares it to be the portrait of every soul unwashed in the blood of the Lamb.

But, as the morning sun, when it rises upon the earth, dispels the shades of night and brings light and life with the new-born day ; so when the “Sun of Righteousness” arises upon the darkness of the natural heart, a change as great and vital passes over it. No longer blinded by the mists of sin, the

soul is "full of light." "The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day," while their future home is radiant with brightness; "for the glory of God" lightens it, "and the Lamb is the light thereof."

Has this mighty change passed over your spirit? Have you "cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light"? Then—"walk as children of light." Let your motives, your thoughts, your conversation, your actions be such as to prove that you "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." As the moon receives the brightness of the sun, not for her own glory, but to bless and benefit mankind; so should the Christian receive light and life from Christ, not selfishly to benefit himself alone, but that he may become a source of light and blessing to others. Seek, then, so to "shine" by a holy life, that others may be won to embrace that religion which you prove to be so lovely, so desirable.

"Awake, my soul! and with the sun  
Thy daily course of duty run;  
Shake off dull sloth, and early rise  
To pay thy morning sacrifice.

"Let all thy converse be sincere,  
Thy conscience as the noontide clear;  
Think how the all-seeing God thy ways  
And all thy secret thoughts surveys"



"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## WEDNESDAY EVENING.

"Awake, thou that sleepest!"—*Epistle.*



UNDER dwelling is on fire; but the owner lies in a state of unconsciousness. His faculties are no longer on the alert. Danger and death are at his very door, but he knows it not. He is asleep. Rouse him; tell him that his house is wrapped in flames—that destruction threatens himself and all he loves! How he springs to his feet; his powers all in action! Quick to plan and prompt to execute! There is no stopping to inquire the cause of the conflagration, or how it might have been avoided, until he has saved all that is possible from ruin.

Does the eye of any unconverted soul rest upon these pages? The same warning comes to every unregenerate sinner. "Awake, thou that sleepest!" The fires of hell are raging and threaten to destroy your guilty soul. "Escape for thy life, lest thou be consumed." God does not desire your death. He warns you by His ministers, He urges you by His threatenings, He draws you by His love. If these means fail, He will send losses and afflictions upon you, He will take from you the light of your eyes and the joy of your heart; for He loves your soul, and will not willingly let it perish. He will do every thing but *drive* men into salvation.

Do not delay. The awful gulf of perdition yawns before you; and it is only through God's mercy that you do not even now "dwell with everlasting burnings." Do not stop to inquire why sin entered into the world. It is here. It is in your own heart. It is dragging you down to hell. Fly then to the arms of Jesus. There alone is safety; for He has conquered sin and Satan, and will deliver all who trust in Him from their dread power. Are you waiting for a more "convenient season"? What better time can there be than the present, which the Church has set apart that we may commemorate the dying love of Jesus for our race—that we may fall before the Cross in penitence and faith, and feel the precious blood-drops cleansing our guilty souls? Then hesitate no longer. Choose this day whom you will serve; and give no repose to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, until your heart is surrendered to Jesus.

"Sinner, rouse thee from thy sleep!  
Wake, and o'er thy folly weep!  
Raise thy spirit dark and dead!  
Jesus waits His light to shed.

"Leave thy folly, cease thy crime!  
From this hour redeem thy time;  
Life secure without delay,  
Evil is the mortal day."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## THURSDAY MORNING.

"Jesus was casting out a devil."—*Gospel.*



THE subject of demoniacal possession is one of the most mysterious in the whole Bible. So incomprehensible is it, that some have chosen to doubt it altogether, and to impute to ordinary diseases those instances attributed by the sacred writers to the malice of demons. But possession by evil spirits is spoken of by the evangelists as distinct from disease of every kind. (Matt. 4 : 24.) And these demons are represented as acting in a manner totally impossible to any one afflicted with epilepsy or insanity. They always knew Christ, they revered Him, they trembled before Him, they besought Him to depart from them, not to punish them before their time, etc. They even possessed powers of divination, as in the case of the damsel out of whom St. Paul expelled the evil spirit. No sudden spasms or chronic derangement could enable the sufferer to perform such acts, or confer such knowledge and power.

It is evidence of a very weak or a very prejudiced mind to receive nothing which we can not understand, no matter how strong the proof by which it is supported. Those who adopt this theory should

begin by denying their own existence ; for who can tell the nature of that mysterious principle which we call life, or in what manner it exerts its influence over the members of the body ? Yet he who doubts his existence would be deemed insane. The veriest atheist will plough his fields and sow his seed obedient to the laws of nature, and will confidently expect an abundant harvest ; yet he is utterly incapable of understanding or explaining how the seed which he buries in the ground to die becomes converted into the glorious plant that bends its ripened head to the summer breeze.

Let us see in Christ's victory over the devil, when He was on earth, an assurance of our final victory through Him. If God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," Satan may afflict us for a time, but he can not permanently harm any soul that has fled to Jesus for refuge.

"Ye trembling souls, dismiss your fear,  
Be mercy all your theme—  
Mercy, which like a river flows  
In one continual stream.

"Fear not the powers of earth and hell ;  
God will these powers restrain,  
His mighty arm their rage repel,  
And make their efforts vain."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## THURSDAY EVENING.

“He casteth out devils through Beelzebub.”—*Gospel.*



THE multiplicity of demoniacal possessions in the time of Christ was doubtless intended as a proof of the coming of Him who was to bruise the serpent's head. The multitude who thronged about Him saw it thus, and asked among each other, “Is not this the Son of David?” But the Scribes and Pharisees—those who pretended to be the interpreters of the prophets and the expounders of the law—utterly shut their hearts and minds to conviction, and thrust the truth from them, by professing to attribute this wonderful miracle to Beelzebub. They implied that Jesus was in league with the devil, and, through collusion with him, obtained power over the inferior demons. They demanded of Him a sign from heaven to disprove their impious suggestion, as though any sign could be given sufficient to convince such obstinately prejudiced minds.

Yet Jesus, with the utmost patience, undertakes to argue with them. He shows them that the course they charge Him with pursuing would be the very one to overthrow Satan's dominion—that a family or kingdom divided against itself, shattered by internal broils and dissensions, must fall into

utter ruin. Again, Christ appeals to their own children. Some among the Jews themselves who were not in combination with Jesus had, in the name of the God of Israel, cast out devils. Instead of charging such with agreement with Satan, they had honored them for it, and considered the nation exalted by their power. Why condemn that in Christ which they approved in themselves? But, said Jesus with terrible solemnity, "if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come unto you." And they in their blind rage and malice were sinning against the Holy Ghost by attributing His own blessed work to hellish influences.

The "kingdom of God" is come also unto us. We may reject it. We may close our hearts to its entrance. But the chariot of the Lord rolls on, and we must either attach ourselves to it as his followers or be crushed under its victorious wheels.

"What think ye of Christ? is the test  
To try both your state and your scheme;  
You can not be right in the rest  
Unless you think rightly of Him.  
As Jesus appears in your view,  
As He is beloved or not,  
So God is disposed to you,  
And mercy or wrath is your lot."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## FRIDAY MORNING.

"He that is not with Me is against Me."—*Gospel.*



THE Saviour still goes on in His patient efforts to convince, if it were possible, even the haughty Pharisee. He now points His previous arguments with an illustration. The "strong man armed" is Satan. The "stronger than he" is Christ. Thus, as a strong man armed, the devil holds possession of the bodies and souls of men. No power but one can wrest them from him. He keeps his goods in peace, for he easily deludes the soul with his sophistries, and hardens it against the truth, by all the power of pride and prejudice. But the "stronger than he" comes, and Satan trembles. Christ robs the spoiler of his prey, and sets the captive free. By this parable He proves to the Jews that one who can wrest Satan's victims from him, and drive him out from the place he had possessed so long, must be more powerful than he.

To this argument the Saviour adds a solemn warning: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." He does not allow those who heard Him to imagine that they could remain neutral in this matter. Having proved His commission and His authority, He now

calls them to a decision, and shows them plainly the solemn responsibility which rested upon them.

As with them, so with us. There is no neutral ground. *With* Christ or *against* Him, *gathering* with Him or *scattering*, is the real state of every soul. Let us not deceive ourselves. If there are any more wretched in the world of woe than others, surely they are those who blindly flattered themselves on earth that they were Christ's, who came to the very judgment-seat boasting that they had even cast out devils in His name, and yet had found themselves rejected with the chilling sentence, "I never knew you; depart from me, *ye that work iniquity*." We can have no just ground of confidence that we are in Christ unless we are gathering with Him; gathering from the paths of vice and folly, to add to the followers of virtue and humility; gathering from the hosts of sin and Satan, to add to the army of Christ. Are you gathering or scattering?

"God crowneth no divided heart ;

Oh ! hallow to Him all thy life.

Who loveth Jesus but in part,

He works himself much pain and strife,

And gains what he deserveth well,

Here conflict, and hereafter hell—

Press on !



"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## FRIDAY EVENING.

"I will return unto my house."—*Gospel.*



OUR Saviour by this parable concludes the discourse to which the remark of the wicked Jews had led when they charged Him with being in collusion with the devil. In it He plainly shows their present state, and prophesies the awful depths of wickedness into which they should finally fall. But its teachings have a meaning and application far broader than the nation of Israel. It is fraught with a lesson to every soul, and shows us that no partial reformation, no cleansing of the outside, no sweeping and garnishing, will suffice to free the heart from the dominion of Satan.

Very possibly, in cases of demoniacal possession, the evil spirit occasionally left his victim for a time. But such seasons of relief were brief. For when Satan *voluntarily* leaves a soul, it is only to return to it with increased malignity. This unclean spirit sought rest, but found none; for his rest and enjoyment were to do mischief and to "cause some to fall." He resolves to return. He finds his house "swept and garnished," and, as St. Matthew tells us, "*empty*." In his absence a partial reformation has taken place. The man, somewhat aroused to

his real condition, has cleansed himself from many of the pollutions of sin. He has renounced his open vices ; he has given up some of his iniquitous habits ; but his house is "empty." No other guest has been invited to fill the place which Satan vacated. And so when the evil spirit returns, he finds nothing to oppose his resuming full possession.

Let us beware of an *empty heart*. Have we attempted to drive out Satan ? Are we striving at this solemn season to rid our souls of sinful habits which long have bound us under his power ? Then let us hasten to fill the place with Jesus. Let us beg Him to enter in and dwell with us. For only by having Him as the soul's occupant can the unclean spirit be effectually expelled. He may return and seek to reënter his former mansion ; but when he sees the "Stronger than he" abiding there, he will flee from us, gnashing his teeth.

"Never could my heart be blessed,  
Till from guilt I found it freed ;  
Jesus now has me released,  
I in Him am free indeed.

"In His blood such peace I find,  
In His love such joy is given ;  
He who is to Jesus joined,  
Find on earth a little heaven."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.

## SATURDAY MORNING.

"The last state of that man is worse than the first."—*Gospel.*



HE unclean spirit finds his former abode unoccupied. It is "empty, swept, and garnished;" and thus being made only more attractive during his absence—for Satan loves the formal professor or the accomplished hypocrite—he returns to his abode to leave it no more forever. Nor does he return alone. "Seven other spirits more wicked than himself" accompany him, and "they enter in and dwell there." "The last state of that man is worse than the first."

So it was with the Jews. "According to Josephus, the character of the Jews, just before their final destruction by the Romans, was the vilest that can be conceived; and they pressed on to their own ruin, as if they had been possessed of legions of devils, and wrought up to the last degree of madness." But it is the case not only with the Jews. How often does it happen that the heart for a time, sickens of sin, and resists its power, only to rush into it again with renewed zest, and to give up the whole man to wickedness?

A singularly appropriate illustration of this parable may be found in the history of Saul. The evil spirit which had possessed him for a time, de-

parted from him : but it returned again ; and as though accompanied by seven other fiends, he became far more wicked than before. All the powers of his mind were bent on the destruction of David, until he filled up the measure of his iniquity, by openly consulting the evil spirit under whose secret influences he had acted so long.

Those who surrender themselves to the control of Satan now must be his slaves hereafter. To the dominion of this Arch-fiend are they to be forever given up. The place "prepared for the devil and his angels" must be their abode throughout eternity. No drop of water will cool their burning tongues. No Saviour's voice will speak peace to their tormented hearts. No cross will be upraised to rescue them from perdition. All will be the "blackness of darkness" and despair forever.

But now the devil may be driven out, and Christ invited as our heart's King and Guest. Shall any of us prove so reckless as to prefer Satan to Jesus ?

"Apollyon's arm may shower  
Darts thick as hail, and hide  
Heaven's face as in the hour  
When Christ on Calvary died ;  
No powers of darkness in the field  
Can tread thee down unless thou yield."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## SATURDAY EVENING.

“Rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.”—*Gospel.*



OUR Blessed Lord, except on one occasion when, in fulfillment of prophecy, He entered Jerusalem as her King, ever shrank from human applause. It would seem that the woman referred to in this narrative had been an attentive listener to the words which He had uttered in reply to the haughty Pharisees; and they commended themselves so entirely to her approval, that she could not forbear expressing her high sense of His wisdom, and the honor of being connected with such a man by the ties of blood. But here, as on another occasion, He showed His hearers that none need envy His human relations; for there was a higher blessedness to which all might attain. “Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

Behold what honor Christ puts upon all who love and obey His holy will. Precious thought! that we may be a mother, a brother, or a sister to the Son of God. We would not dare to claim such honor for ourselves; but since He has offered us this endearing appellation, shall we not count it our

noblest distinction, and try to prove ourselves worthy of it? Would a mother's heart do aught that could disgrace an idolized son? Would a sister's affection prompt to any thing that might disparage a brother, who was dear as her own soul? Then if we hold this tender relationship to Christ, we will be equally jealous of His honor, prompt to shield His cause from reproach, careful that He suffer no shame from our evil ways, and ready to endure suffering and loss, if needs be, for His dear name.

And when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels, to take to Himself great power, and to reign forever, as "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" when earth and hell are trembling before Him, and the heavens are passing away like a scroll; when the dead, small and great, are standing before God, and the judgment books are opened, what ecstasy of joy will thrill our hearts to be acknowledged before the assembled universe, His mother, His sister, or His brother.

"Sweeter sounds than music knows,  
Charm me in Emmanuel's name;  
All her hopes my spirit owes  
To His birth, and cross, and shame.

"O my Saviour, Shield, and Sun,  
Shepherd, Brother, glorious Friend!  
Every precious name in one,  
I will love Thee without end."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

MORNING.

"Our evil deeds."—*Collect.*



THE guilt of a criminal is estimated, not merely by the nature of his crime, but also by the circumstances under which it was committed. In this light let us look at "our evil deeds." We have offended against a Being of infinite purity, wisdom, justice, and truth. God established for the government of His creatures a system of law as perfect as Himself. No one has ever been able to suggest any change by which it might be improved. To offend against it, may produce disaster as serious in the moral world as would be produced in the physical universe if one of the laws were to be set aside which control the motions of the heavenly bodies in space. Yet, with full knowledge of these facts, we have openly disregarded God's commands, and made our own will and pleasure our rule of life.

But again, the Deity is infinitely *good*. This abode of beauty in which we live was fitted up by His loving skill. These wonderful bodies, so exquisitely adapted to use and enjoy this outer world,

are His handiwork. Ever since we were born has His protecting care been over us; every blessing that we enjoy comes from the lovingkindness of our God. Yet we have proved ourselves unthankful and unholy. Like the swine, we have seized upon the gifts without one thought of the Giver, and only raised our eyes to Him to ask for more.

When God looked down from heaven, and saw us ruined by our sins—saw how utterly hopeless we had made our condition by our disobedience and rebellion, He added yet another to His gifts of love—His last, best gift. He sent His Son to take our nature upon Him; to show us by His life how we ought to live, and in our stead to suffer and to die. How have we received that Son? For how many years have we said, “We will not have this man to reign over us,” and coolly turned from the record of His sufferings as though we had no part nor share in them? Well may we smite upon our breast, crying, “My evil deeds! my evil deeds! God, be merciful to me a sinner.”

“Grace on the past with tearful eyes to gaze,  
And loathe myself for all my evil ways,

Oh! grant Thou me!

To make no more complaint of ill or loss,  
But with meek gratitude take up my cross,  
And follow Thee!

Grace to remember all I might have done,  
To feel myself in debt to every one;  
Nor dare another to condemn or blame;  
Sealed up my lips, remembering mine own shame.”



"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

NOON.

"Which worthily deserve to be punished."—*Collect.*



HE majesty of law can not be contemned with impunity. So necessary is it seen to be in human institutions, that a single crime is oftentimes sufficient to deprive a man of life, or cause him to spend long years of retribution within prison walls. And if our offenses against human government be justly considered worthy of such condemnation, what judgments are too severe to be inflicted on the guilty soul that willfully and recklessly defies the authority of God? None but the Almighty, who alone knows the real character and extent of our transgressions, is able to judge of the punishment they deserve. Yet we know enough of the nature and desert of sin to realize that the law can be only our judge and executioner. *Utter condemnation* is its only verdict. God's law demands *perfect obedience* in *thought, word, and deed*. How have we rendered that obedience? It commands, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." How have we regarded that precept? It declares, "Whosoever shall offend

in one point, he is guilty of all." Yet we have offended in innumerable instances, not ignorantly, but willfully, and with full knowledge of the sin; so that our past lives, instead of presenting a record blotted here and there by an occasional fault, is one vast catalogue of guilt, to the blackness of which there is no relief.

But, louder than the reproaches of our own consciences, louder than the thunders of Sinai, does the Cross of Christ proclaim the majesty of God's violated law, and the punishment our guilt has deserved. Here alone can we rightly learn how great was our sin, how entire our condemnation, how utterly hopeless any efforts of our own to restore us to purity and innocence, and to blot out all the dark record of the past. Only as we are gazing with faith upon the Crucified can we hopefully pray, "O Lord God most holy! O Lord most mighty! O holy and most merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death."

"Oh! cast not out my prayer. Thou who didst give

Thine only Son to die that we might live,

Heal Thou my soul!

Let me not faint, let me not cease to pray,

Till Thou hast heard me. Send me not away

Until made whole!

Turn from my sins Thy face! I come to Thee

With prayers and tears, through Him who died for me;

Thou knowest in His name alone I trust,

And for myself would hide me in the dust."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

EVENING.

“The comfort of Thy grace.”—*Collect.*



OUR thoughts to-night are called to take a happier turn. And if we have truly and sincerely meditated upon the enormity of “our evil deeds,” and the punishment they have deserved, we will be prepared now to consider with grateful joy the comfort of God’s grace. As the Cross of Christ displays in the strongest light the exceeding sinfulness of sin, so does it also display the exceeding grace of God. That our heavenly Father so loved His ungrateful and rebellious children as to be willing to make such a costly sacrifice in their behalf—that the Lord Jesus Christ was so moved by pitying love as to offer Himself a ransom for our guilt, though utterly transcending the power of human reason to conceive, is a thought full of unspeakable comfort. Here may our trembling souls find rest. Beneath the Cross may the sinner, though double-dyed with transgression, be washed white as snow. Here may the penitent take his stand, while the law denounces the wrath of God “on every soul of man that doeth evil,” and feel that it has no power to condemn one

whom the blood of Jesus has restored to judicial innocence.

Has the comfort of God's grace relieved your mind from its guilty terrors? Do not be satisfied without it. If, "with a true penitent heart," you have fled to Christ, then take the blessed assurance which His word affords: "Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out." It is not humility, it is utter unbelief, that refuses to receive what Christ has spoken; that still hugs its misery to its heart, and will not part with it, even though God, who can not lie, has declared with an oath His willingness to receive and pardon every repentant and returning sinner. Cast away such guilty doubts of God's love and mercy, and with steadfast eyes beholding Jesus on the Cross, dying for your sins, exclaim with grateful faith, "The Lord hath done great things for me, whereof I am glad." "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."

"Rejoice, believer, in the Lord,  
Who makes your cause His own;  
The hope that's built upon His word  
Can ne'er be overthrown.

"Though many foes beset your road,  
And feeble is your arm,  
Your life is hid with Christ in God,  
Beyond the reach of harm."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.

## MONDAY MORNING.

"These are the two covenants."—*Epistle.*



WHEN God created man in His own image, that is, without sin, and with the power of holiness, He gave him a law, which was also God's image, representing His eternal attributes of holiness, justice, and truth. There was an entire harmony between its demands and man's ability to fulfill them; and therefore, God's law and God's creation, being thus formed and fitted for each other, conformity to His precepts was no arbitrary or impossible exaction, but an easy and delightful work. But Adam sinned; and, by one act of transgression, he sundered forever this harmony, and made himself incapable of that perfect righteousness which the law required. What then? Could the Creator withdraw His demands, because the creature, by his own voluntary act, had rendered himself incapable of fulfilling them? Could He make His law less perfect in itself, less a copy of His own mind? Could He make it, in short, an apology for man's guilt, instead of a vindication of God's holiness? No, God would cease to be God, if he could thus descend from His own perfections. He would justify Satan's lie, "Thou shalt not surely die," and make

it the utterance of simple truth. Therefore, in Adam *all* died; for all his children have inherited his proclivity to sin.

This perfect and unchangeable law of God makes the same demands on us that it made on Adam. Not one jot or tittle of it has ever been repealed. Perfect obedience in thought, word, and deed; entire devotion to God from the first moment of conscious being to the last; a love that never falters; a submission that never fails; these are its requirements, proclaimed first to Adam, and again thundered forth amid all the solemn sanctions of Sinai; while over the head of the transgressor hangs the awful denunciation, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." This is the covenant of works, under which every child of man is born; and multitudes—yea, all who are not believers in Christ—are hoping to win heaven thereby. Alas! on what a broken reed are they resting their hopes of eternal salvation!

"Vain and presumptuous is the trust  
Which in our works we place;  
Salvation from a higher source  
Flows to our fallen race.

"'Tis from the love of God through Christ,  
That all our hopes begin;  
His mercy saved our souls from death,  
And washed us from our sin."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## MONDAY EVENING.

"These are the two covenants."—*Epistle.*



AS we learned from our meditation this morning, God never has, and never can, consistently with His own perfections, lower the demands of His law, and receive aught but perfect obedience, as any ground for the sinner's justification. So that by the covenant of works we are shut out from the least hope of eternal life. It is not until we realize this fully that we are prepared to form any just estimate of that "better covenant which was established upon better promises."

From the time of the pledge given to our first parents, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, every saint of God has become such by being made a partaker of this "new covenant." What is the peculiarity of the Covenant of Grace? It is not that God demands less than He did before, but that *He accepts it at the hands of another*. Christ took the sinner's place. For thirty-three years He walked this earth, to work out for us a perfect obedience. And because the law of God had denounced death to the transgressor, He died, and was "made a curse for us." The principle by which we become partakers of this new cov-

enant is simply one of exchange. Christ assumed our sins and their punishment, as though they were His own, though He contracted no personal pollution or defilement thereby. We, by faith in Him, have the merits of His obedience and death imputed unto us, and are treated by God as though we had never sinned, though we gain no absolute holiness by this act of faith. It is exceedingly important that we obtain clear and just views of this better covenant, and become fully persuaded that no deeds of ours, whether before or after conversion, have any thing whatever to do with securing for us the boon of salvation. It is all of grace, free grace, from first to last, purchased for us by the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. So teaches our scriptural Church in the Eleventh Article of Religion: "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works and deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort."

"I thought upon the law, the fiery law,  
Holy and just, and good in its decree;  
I looked to Jesus, and in Him I saw  
That law fulfilled, its curse endured for me.

"I saw my sad estate, condemned to die—  
Then terror seized my heart, and dark despair;  
But when to Calvary I turned my eye,  
I saw the Cross, and read forgiveness there."



"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.

## TUESDAY MORNING

"Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free."—*Epistle*.



OW the Jews, even at the present day, love Jerusalem, and long for its possession! "The heart of this wonderful people, in whatever clime they roam, still turns to it as the city of their promised rest. They take pleasure in her ruins, and would kiss the very dust for her sake. Jerusalem is the centre around which the exiled sons of Judah build, in imagination, the mansions of their future greatness. In whatever part of the world he may live, the heart's desire of a Jew is to be buried in Jerusalem. Thither they return from other countries, among which they have been scattered: and when, after all their longings and all their struggles up the steps of life, we see them poor and blind and naked in the streets of their once happy Zion, he must have a cold heart that can remain untouched by their sufferings, without uttering a prayer to God that He would have mercy on the darkness of Judah, and that the day star of Bethlehem might arise in their hearts."

The Jerusalem for which they so long and weep can promise them little but a grave; while our Zion is "Jerusalem above," beautiful as a "bride adorned

for her husband," all light, purity, and gladness; for "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth." Sin and sorrow come to its inhabitants only as a memory of the past, to awaken anew their harps in praises of redeeming love. It is of little consequence that our life here is so poor, brief, and sad, if our hearts are full of the inheritance above that waits our coming.

What are your thoughts this morning in anticipation of the duties of the day? Are you weary already in the prospect of another season of heavy toil, to which you see no end but in the grave? How sweet to look forward to that home where the "weary are at rest"! Are you called to bear the cross of sickness or suffering? There "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Are you to endure the perverseness of others, and suffer harshness and reproach? There "the rebuke of his people he shall take away." One moment of heaven will far outweigh all the sorrows of earth, and we will then be amazed that, with the prospect of eternal bliss before us, earthly grief could so have moved us.

"O mother dear, Jerusalem!

When shall I come to thee?

When shall my sorrows have an end?

Thy joys when shall I see?

O happy harbor of God's saints!

O sweet and pleasant soil!

In thee no sorrows can be found,

No grief, no care, no toil."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## TUESDAY EVENING.

"The desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband."—*Epistle.*



HERE is no doubt that the primary intention of the Apostle here, is to represent the future glory of the Church gathered from among the Gentiles, and its great increase as compared with the Jewish Church. In the Apocalyptic vision, John "heard the number of them that were sealed; and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel;" while from out of other nations was gathered "a great multitude which no man could number." In times like the present, when iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold, such promises are full of encouragement. We feel that Christ has not deserted His Church; but that she shall yet "awake," put on her "beautiful garments," and "shine" with "the glory of the Lord."

There is another application of this passage which, though perhaps merely incidental, is too full of comfort to those who "watch for souls, as they that must give account," to be entirely overlooked. The children born to an earthly parent must, in the ordinary course of nature, be few in number; while,

in the providence of God, many know nothing of the parent's joy. But to none are denied spiritual offspring. They who are wise to win souls, whose hearts are full of the love of Jesus, and who can not rest without others knowing and loving him too, shall, through the blessing of God, be permitted to see many fruits of their labors. How enrapturing the thought that, when summoned to give an account of their stewardship, they will be able to present souls to Jesus, and say, Lord, here am "I, and the children which God hath given me!" Can any happiness be imagined greater than being permitted, not only to enter heaven ourselves, but also to bring others there who, but for our instrumentality, might have been forever lost? Surely the sight of one such saved one, as we sing the praises of the Lamb, will cause our hearts to thrill with new rapture, and our harps to sound a louder strain of thanksgiving. Are there any to whom you stand in this happy relation of spiritual parentage? Let it ever be your holy ambition to increase the number of those who, throughout eternity, shall rise up and call you blessed.

"But oh! what blessings may be thine, when thou hast daily  
striven

To guide souls in the narrow path that leadeth up to heaven!  
What joy to see the youthful feet in wisdom's ways remain!  
To know that by the grace of God thy labor is not vain!  
Though 'tis a work of toil and care, of labor and of love,  
If such the recompense on earth, what shall it be above?"

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## WEDNESDAY MORNING.

“He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.”—*Epistle.*



THE world will tell you that it admires and respects true excellence, and rewards it with its homage; that it ridicules and despises only hypocrisy and cant. But the word of God says, No. Never was there but one example of pure, unspotted goodness. Never was there but One in whom the utmost ingenuity of hatred could detect no fault. Never but One, of whom even His enemies were compelled to say after the most untiring efforts to prove Him guilty, “I find no fault in him.” Now, did the world honor this surpassing virtue, acknowledge its superiority, yield to its claims, and follow its example? Let the story of the Crucified answer the question. Where can we find one more malignantly persecuted, more basely reviled, more wantonly tortured, more exultingly slain, than Jesus of Nazareth? Taunted as a wine-bibber, as a friend of publicans and sinners, as in league with Satan, as Himself possessed by a devil, He was slandered, derided, and persecuted even to the Cross.

“The disciple is not above his Master.” The same cross must be borne by every follower of the

Lamb; for "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The amphitheatre, the rack, the stake, exist now only in the recollections of the past. But the *spirit* of persecution is alive yet, and manifests itself in many ways. And the martyrdom of spirit, by insults and taunts, by sarcasm and ridicule, by coldness and neglect, which many have been called upon to endure for Christ, through long years, is no less hard to bear than the sharper but quicker modes of pagan or papal torture.

Let us not make a mistake, and count ourselves martyrs when we are buffeted only for our *faults*. Suffering for our evil deeds will never weave for us a martyr's crown. "But if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf;" remembering Him "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

"The writhings of a wounded heart  
Are fiercer than a foeman's dart.  
Oft in life's stillest shade reclining,  
In desolation unrepining,  
Meek souls there are, who little dream  
Their daily strife an angel's theme,  
Or that the rod they take so calm,  
Shall prove in heaven a martyr's palm."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## WEDNESDAY EVENING.

"The son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman."—*Epistle.*



IN this spiritual allegory, Ishmael is taken as the type of all who are "born after the flesh." Sons of a bond-woman, they are themselves slaves, "in bondage under the elements of the world;" and though, as he, they may be partakers of many of the children's blessings, they have no part or lot in the inheritance. But Isaac typifies all who are "born after the Spirit;" those who believe the promises of God, and embrace them, and confess that they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They seek not their happiness in the things of time, but are looking forward "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

When meditating on the pure, abiding joys of heaven, the heart grows sad to think that any will be so blinded as to prefer the hollow and vanishing pleasures of earth. We feel how strong is the spell with which Satan deludes his votaries, and how marvellous the grace of God, that has opened our eyes, and plucked our feet out of the net. But let us not be satisfied with pitying others and congratulating ourselves. Let us "sound an alarm," that will

arouse some of these sleepers on the "Enchanted Ground." It may be very pleasant to sit down in self-complacency, and meditate upon the joys of heaven, and our own anticipated share therein ; but if we can calmly rest satisfied to see others still in bondage to sin and Satan, our religion is at best but a very selfish one, possessing so little of the spirit of Christ that we may well question if it be not a mere sham.

But there is another consideration connected with the thought of our heirship which should fill our hearts with joy ; and that is, that our detention from it will be but for "a little while." "A little while!" what comfort there is in these words. Do enemies afflict, do cares annoy, does pining sickness waste away your strength ? It is but for "a little while," and then every thing that distresses God's children shall have passed away forever. Only make sure that you possess the "earnest" of your inheritance, the "Holy Spirit of promise."

"This life of ours, these lingering years of earth,  
Are briefer, swifter than they seem ;  
'A little while,' and the great second birth  
Of time shall come, the prophet's ancient theme !  
Then He the King, the Judge, at length shall come,  
And for this desert where we sadly roam,  
Shall give the kingdom for our endless home,  
The land of which I dream."



“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## THURSDAY MORNING.

“A great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles.”—*Gospel.*



HE disciples had just returned from a long missionary tour, and reported to Jesus their varied success. Sympathizing with their weariness, He departed with them “into a desert place by ship, privately,” that they might have a season of rest. But this boon they were not permitted to enjoy. Thousands, discovering his intention, and regardless, it would seem, even of making provision for their bodily needs, followed Him by land, and in their eager haste outwent our Lord and His disciples, and arrived first at the place. (Mark 6 : 33.) When Jesus saw the immense throng gathered to receive Him, as He landed from the ship, did He plead His own and His disciples’ fatigue, and excuse Himself from receiving them? No. He “was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd.” Sitting upon the mountain side, with His own chosen twelve gathered around Him, and the listening throng covering the sides of the hill to its very base, “He spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.”

There is a lesson for us in the conduct of these men, and may the Holy Spirit impress it upon every heart! Did they expose themselves to such inconvenience, fatigue, and even possible suffering from want of food, to gratify curiosity or secure relief for their bodily ailments, and we creep with snail-like pace to gain blessings for our souls. Let us blush for our slothfulness, and press on as they pressed on after Christ.

As Christ once sat upon this mountain of Galilee, receiving with such infinite grace and patience all who came unto Him, and ministering to all their wants; so He now sits upon the throne of His glory, to shed forth the blessings of pardon and peace on every seeking soul. Have you any desire for such blessings? Then come to Him whom God hath exalted "to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

"My drowsy powers, why sleep ye so?

Awake, my sluggish soul!

Nothing has half thy work to do,

Yet nothing's half so dull.

"We, for whom God the Son came down,

And labored for our good,

How careless to secure that crown

He purchased with His blood!"

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## THURSDAY EVENING.

“Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”—*Gospel.*



THE day was now far spent,” and yet the Saviour taught, and yet the eager multitude hung upon His words. The interruption came from our Lord’s own disciples. Approaching Him, they said, “This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed : send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread : for they have nothing to eat.” (Mark 6 : 35, 36.) Whatever may have been their concern for the people, it was rude and impertinent to break in upon the Master’s teaching by such uncalled-for dictation ; and we can not but suspect that self-interest, rather than generous regard for others, prompted their action. Yet as Christ had borne with the multitude, so does He now bear with His own. His reply shows far more tender solicitude for the wearied throng than the disciples themselves had done. He will not send them abroad over the country to find food ; He will “furnish a table in the wilderness.” Turning to Philip, He propounds to him the question which supplies us this evening with a theme for meditation. There was a peculiar propriety in appealing to this disciple ; for “Philip

was of Bethsaida," a city in their immediate neighborhood, and would therefore be apt to know where the necessary food could be obtained. Yet we would not catch the Saviour's real intention in asking this question, had not St. John told us that Jesus said this "to prove him; for He Himself knew what He would do."

Have we ever been placed in the situation of Philip? Doubtless; for Jesus often tries His people thus to draw out their faith in Him. Often does He place them in positions of difficulty and embarrassment. He shows them an end to be attained to which their own resources are wholly unequal, and then says to them, as it were, "What is to be done?" Happy is that soul that can look up in holy trust to Him in whom all fullness dwells, assured that the infinite resources of Omnipotence shall be exhausted ere Christ fail to provide a supply for every time of need. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in him."


"I have no help save Thine; nor do I need  
Another arm save Thine to lean upon;  
It is enough, my Lord, enough indeed;  
My strength is in Thy might, Thy might alone.

"I have no wisdom, save in Him who is  
My Wisdom and my Teacher, both in one;  
No wisdom can I lack while Thou art wise;  
No teaching do I crave, save Thine alone."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## FRIDAY MORNING.

“Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.”—*Gospel*.

HILIP had been a constant attendant on Christ for about two years. One of His earliest disciples, he had listened to His teachings, seen His miracles, and never known an application to Him for relief to fail. Yet in the present emergency his faith proved too weak to stand the trial. The physical inability was before his eyes, but the divine Helper was forgotten. As he cons over the difficulty, and surveys the hungry throng, he exclaims, “Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a *little*.” Perhaps this was the whole amount in their common fund. Beyond that he saw no available means, even though they were willing to impoverish themselves for the sake of others.

Would you have done better? You think you would? But have you never been tried? Take a retrospective glance and recall some time of distress or need, when all the means at your disposal seemed utterly insufficient for the emergency. Did you not turn everywhere, and examine every prospect of relief from earthly sources before you applied to

Christ? You surveyed your whole dependence; but you could make nothing more than the "five barley loaves and two small fishes."

We carry this want of confidence even into our religion. We feel our hearts cold, our faith languid, our repentance insincere, and are filled with doubt, and gloom, and distrustful questionings, instead of at once seeking relief from Jesus. This is all a mistake. We must learn to say, what Philip should have said, Lord, I am poor and ignorant, unable to accomplish any thing by my own power, or to discern what should be done. But Thou hast all power committed unto Thee, and I know that Thou wilt never turn the needy away empty. Such a spirit shall never be disappointed of its hope. "Lord, increase our faith."

"Faith fails ;

Else cares would die,

And we should on God's care rely.

Man for the coming day doth grieve and fret,

And all past days doth sinfully forget.

For every beast God's care avails—

Why not for us? Faith fails."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## FRIDAY EVENING.

"They were filled."—*Gospel.*



**W**HAT thoughts do you suppose must have filled the hearts of the disciples as, in obedience to the Master's orders, they conveniently arranged the vast company on the soft grass, and then saw the loaves and fishes blessed by Jesus miraculously grow, as they distributed them, into an abundant meal for five thousand men, "besides women and children"? (Matt. 14: 21.) It was not a little which each one received—just enough to dull the edge of hunger, until they could supply themselves with more. "They were *filled*," and retired from the feast leaving more fragments on the ground than composed the whole of the original supply.

We are very much like this hungry multitude. While in the body, we are in the wilderness. There is much of beauty in earth and sky, in the lofty mountain and the smooth lake, in the companionship of friends and the voice of instruction. But our souls are hungry amid it all, and we long to be fed. The servants of Christ attend upon us with their ministrations. Yet the hymns of praise, the voice of prayer, the eloquence of the pulpit, even the sacraments themselves, are but what the "five

barley loaves and two small fishes" would have been among the five thousand, without the blessing of Christ. We forget this too often, and seek from the ordinances themselves that spiritual life and vigor which they have no inherent power to impart. Yet, blessed by Christ, like these same loaves and fishes, they strengthen and refresh the soul and fill it with God's grace. If you have once tasted that the Lord is gracious, be contented with no meaner food. Christ is the *provider* for His people, as well as their healer and teacher, and in Him is laid up an abundant supply for every necessity. No needy, starving soul ever came to Him without being filled with the bread of life, nor shall any one be sent empty away, even though a miracle has to be wrought in his behalf. He who "giveth to the beast his food and to the young ravens which cry," will never be regardless of those bought with the blood of Jesus. "Open thy mouth *wide*, and I will fill it."

"Look down on a heart which only doth seek  
By Thee to be fed;  
Which weary, and hungry, and guilty, and weak,  
Asks heavenly bread.

"Be Thou the sole glory, and Thou the chief good,  
My heart to control;  
And be Thou the daily and hourly food  
To nourish my soul."



“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## SATURDAY MORNING.

“Gather up the fragments.”—*Gospel.*



THE Master condescends to give His disciples a lesson in practical economy. We would hardly expect Jesus to discourse on such a theme; and perhaps we have often wondered why He who could multiply at will the loaves and fishes into an abundant supply for five thousand, should manifest such regard for the fragments that remain.

It was for our sakes that this lesson was taught. Is there one who does not need to learn it? Is there one who does not allow many fragments of blessings to be wasted which might be improved to God's glory and his own good? How is it with *time*? One by one the golden hours come and go. How many of them do we freight with a blessing as they pass onward into the ocean of eternity? How many pass empty or filled with sin? Then, *money*—one of the most precious means of doing good which God has given us—how much is spent in vanities or luxuries which add not one iota to our respectability or happiness? How many times is the excuse, “It is only a trifle,” or “It is so beautiful I can not resist the temptation,” pleaded as an apology for useless expenditure, which no better reason can justify? Some-

body relates the story of a young girl who divided her desires into two classes, the "*must haves*" and the "*would likes*." The first she gratified unhesitatingly, the second not until she felt that she could do so without injury to any cause she was bound to assist. This rule is a stringent one, and if conscientiously observed, would mercilessly lop off from our dress, our table, our equipage, many of those useless adornments in which we take such delight, and bring into the Lord's treasury many dollars that are now absolutely lost.

As with time and money, so with all our possessions, talents, and opportunities. Let nothing be wasted. Fear not the reproach of meanness. Nothing can be mean which Christ commands and enforces by His own example. Then shall you find yourself many times richer, both in happiness and in the means of doing good, than you ever dreamed yourself to be.

"Do thy little, do it well ;  
Do what right and reason tell,  
Do what wrong and sorrow claim ;  
Conquer sin and cover shame.

"Do thy little, though it be  
Dreariness and drudgery ;  
They whom Christ apostles made  
Gathered fragments when He bade."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## SATURDAY EVENING.

"Then these men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world."—*Gospel*.



THE multitude were profoundly impressed with all that they had seen and heard and experienced this day. Some, now in perfect health, had been carried to His feet in the morning the victims of disease; all had listened to heavenly teachings from His lips; all had been fed by His miraculous power. Can we wonder at their enthusiasm as they cry, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world"? Can we blame them for seeking even to "take him by force and make him a King"? No, it was only the natural outgushing of feelings that could not be restrained. But we do wonder what became of the five thousand when dark days came upon Jesus. Many of them must have been in Jerusalem at that last, sad Passover, when He to whom they would now have rendered homage as their King was mockingly arrayed in royal robes, with thorns for His crown and a reed for His sceptre.

In the words of these men we see exemplified the value of mere lip confession. They were deeply, impulsively, enthusiastically moved; but, we fear,

not heartily. Like the waves of the sea, rising, and swelling, and tossing to and fro under the agitation of the winds, only to sink again into profound calm.

Very serious is this lesson's teaching to us, and especially at this time when all the services of our beloved Church are so well calculated to alarm the conscience and quicken the sensibilities. But let us beware lest we, too, deceive ourselves, and mistake admiration and excitement for genuine conversion of the heart. It is a sad truth that, even in these Christian days, some who once knelt before Christ as their Prophet and King, now "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." May this precious season be to each one of us a time of "great searchings of heart," that we may know in whom we have believed, and may be certain that our hearts, as well as our lips, are uttering the confession, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world."

"If to the right or left I stray,  
That moment, Lord, reprove,  
And bring me back into the way  
From which I dared to move.  
Oh! may the least omission pain  
My well-instructed soul,  
And drive me to that blood again  
Which makes the wounded whole."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

MORNING.

“We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people.”—*Collect.*



O one can offer this prayer in sincerity who is not a child of God. Terrible to the worldling is the idea that God searches out his heart's most secret thought, and is intimately acquainted with the minutest act of his life. While Adam and Eve remained in a state of purity and innocence, they were fearless and happy in the presence of the Almighty; but no sooner had they sinned than they shrank from His eye, and “hid themselves amongst the trees of the garden.”

Would you know the real state of your soul before God? Then ask yourself, whether the thought of Him as a “God unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid,” is a pleasant or a painful one. If you feel that, though defiled and polluted by evil thoughts and unholy imaginations, it is your most earnest desire to lay your heart bare before Him, that He may cleanse it by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit; if, when He looks down into its depths, He sees that it is your most fervent longing to

“perfectly love” Him, and to “worthily magnify” His holy name, you may rest assured that it is well with your soul.

It is an unspeakably precious thought to the Christian that God’s eye is unceasingly upon him, God’s care continually following him. Yet it is likewise an exceedingly solemn thought. Dare he sin under the very gaze of the Almighty? Dare he indulge unholy thoughts when every imagination of his heart is as plainly revealed to God as though lighted up by a sunbeam?

Let us seek to realize more and more this thought of God. Let us accustom ourselves to it, till the fear of it is taken away, and it becomes instead the joy of our hearts and the regulator of our lives. Let us live habitually in the consciousness of our Saviour’s presence, and in holy, blessed intercourse with Him. Then will we not be among those who at the last shall cry to the mountains and rocks, “Fall upon us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

“Lord, Thou hast searched and seen me through ;  
Thine eye commands, with piercing view,  
My rising and my resting hours,  
My heart and flesh, with all their powers.

“Within Thy circling power I stand,  
On every side I find Thy hand ;  
Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,  
I am surrounded still with God.”

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

NOON.

“That by Thy great goodness they may be governed both in body and soul.”—*Collect.*



OW sublime is the thought of God as the Governor of the universe! Sitting upon the throne of omnipotence, invested with His own eternal and absolute perfections, He is Himself Legislator, Executive, and Judge.

Human law is weak, partial, and defective. Even at the best it promotes the welfare of the many at the expense of the few. Often, it is too short-sighted to discern the right, too accessible to bribery and corruption to condemn the wrong. But God governs with a sway all-powerful, wise, and just; wholly unaffected by the chances of time and change. “His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and his dominion is from generation to generation.” In vain does guilt assume the garb of innocence before One whose “eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” “No respecter of persons,” He denounces the secret sin of the crowned monarch with a “Thou art the man!” as sternly as that of the veriest wretch, who trails the serpent’s slime amid the lowest haunts of poverty.

But God is very patient. The violator of His

laws, trembling under the lash of conscience after his first crime, grows bold when no thunderbolt of vengeance arrests him in his course, and presses on in sin with new zest. (Eccl. 8 : 11.) He rashly concludes that God hath not seen, that the Almighty hath not regarded. But the Christian knows better. He sees in all the tangled perplexities of human affairs, that Jehovah is directing the destinies of men and nations according to the counsel of His own will; and it is a thought full of rest, of strength, and joyful confidence. He is assured that though nations may totter and fall, empires be overthrown, and the whole world prove a scene of desolation and bloodshed, yet above all, in the undisturbed serenity of His Godhead, the Almighty is calmly bringing order out of confusion, beauty from desolation, and everlasting righteousness from the wrecks of sin and shame. The day is coming when every tongue shall confess God's equity and truth, even though it be to the sinner's confusion.

“Wait, O my soul! thy Maker's will;  
Tumultuous passions, all be still;  
Nor let a murmuring thought arise:  
His ways are just, His counsel wise.

“He in the thickest darkness dwells,  
Performs His work, the cause conceals;  
But though His methods are unknown,  
Judgment and truth support His throne.”



“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

EVENING.

“That by Thy great goodness they may be preserved, both in body and soul.”—*Collect.*



AND has not God preserved us? In the hour of our birth; in the days of helpless infancy; in the heedlessness of childhood; in the perplexities of after life; down to this present moment, the loving care of our Father has been around us, smoothing our way, guiding our steps, warding off danger, disease, and death, turning away from our souls the shafts of the adversary, and crowning our lives with every thing of joy and blessing that they have ever known.

These loving-kindnesses of old are a pledge of the future. If our past waywardness and sin did not discourage him, when we lived in careless disobedience, and thought not of His commands, shall not His gracious hand preserve us, when we are now striving to do His will? Yes! that soul which has been committed to the guardianship of Jesus shall be His most jealous care. “Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day,” are His own most precious words. And oh! what inexpressible comfort do they not contain! We can not keep our own

souls. "Temptation without and corruption within," would soon restore them to the enemy. But under the protection of Jesus they are safe. No power can wrest them from Him. Fear not then, O Christian! for the future. You may be tempted; you may experience sore affliction; the waves and billows may go over your soul, and threaten to overwhelm you. But if you hold fast to the cross of Christ, you shall not be moved. In your happy experience shall be verified the truth of God's declaration, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; *thou art mine*. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." And when, all enemies overcome but the last, you go forth to the final conflict, then again shall the preserving care of the Lord Jesus be your strength, and insure to you the victory.

"Be still, my heart! these anxious cares  
To thee are burdens, thorns, and snares;  
They cast dishonor on thy Lord,  
And contradict His gracious word.

"Brought safely by His hand thus far,  
Why wilt thou now give place to fear?  
How canst thou want, if He provide,  
Or lose thy way with such a Guide?"

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## MONDAY MORNING.

“Christ being come, an High Priest of good things to come.”

*Epistle.*



ALL the rites and ceremonies of the sacrificial law derived whatever they possessed of virtue and efficacy from their connection with Christ. They were “carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of reformation;” shadowy types, finding their completion and fulfillment in Him as their substance. Never do we comprehend them aright, except as we read them in the light of the New Testament, and see them all pointing to Jesus as their excelling Antitype. Any other attempt to explain or understand them misses their main scope and design.

The High Priest was the head of the Church in the Levitical dispensation. He stood between God and the people, the representative of both. This place our Lord Jesus Christ now occupies. He is the “Daysman” between God and us, laying “His hand upon us both.” This was His peculiar work upon earth; to reveal to us more fully the will and law of God, and to uphold our cause before His Father, by the merits of His sufferings and death.

Into the holy of holies none but the high priest could enter, and he but once a year, “that he die

not." Then he appeared before the mercy-seat, to make expiation, first for his own sins, and afterward for the sins of the people. But Christ needed not to make atonement for His own sins, in that He was without sin. Nor did He appear before an earthly mercy-seat as did Aaron; but He went into the very presence of Jehovah Himself, there offering the merit of His own blood, there making intercession for His people, there bearing their names continually before Him on His heart.


Christ is not only a perfect but a merciful High Priest. "Touched with the feeling of our infirmities," He is able to sympathize with His people in their every trial; for He knows from His own experience the power of temptation. Never need we fear to draw near to God through Him; but pleading the merits of His priestly atonement and intercession, let us "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

"Jesus, our great High Priest,  
Has full atonement made :  
Ye weary spirits, rest ;  
Ye mourning souls, be glad ;  
The year of jubilee has come,  
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me.”

## MONDAY EVENING.

“By a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands.”—*Epistle.*

RE we to understand by this “greater and more perfect tabernacle” our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, or that heaven into which He entered with His own blood, to make reconciliation for our sins? Commentators are divided, some inclining to one opinion, some to the other, so that it seems impossible to decide. But while we may not be able to ascertain the exact, literal meaning of the Apostle’s words, the general scope of them it is not difficult to understand.

The tabernacle was the great centre of the Mosaic ritual; the scene of its most solemn rites; the only place where an acceptable sacrifice could be offered to God, or an atonement for the sins of the people be made. It was the great rallying-place of the nation; the most holy thing within the boundaries of Palestine; hallowed by the most sacred associations, and consecrated by the presence of the Most High. And yet, notwithstanding all this solemnity of ritual and association; notwithstanding the manifestation of God’s presence in the Shekinah, its glory was imperfect. It belonged to the things which were to be done away.

Shall we consider the "greater and more perfect tabernacle" as referring to our Lord Jesus Christ? In Him we find an Antitype, perfect in its analogies, but far transcending in glory. Christ crucified is the great central idea of the Christian economy. The Cross was the scene of the most solemn act of our religion. It was the altar on which was offered the sacrifice which alone gave to all other sacrifices aught of efficacy, and where was made the only real atonement for the sins of the world. Here all Christians unite. Whatever of difference may distinguish them in other things beneath the Cross, all meet on common ground, as common sinners, drawing their all of spiritual life from a common Saviour. In the whole world there is naught so hallowed by sacred association, by fullness of blessing, by the very presence of the Most High God, as the Cross of Christ.

"Not all the blood of beasts,  
On Jewish altars slain,  
Could give the guilty conscience peace,  
Or wash away the stain.

"But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,  
Takes all our sins away ;  
A sacrifice of nobler name  
And richer blood than they."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## TUESDAY MORNING.

"The blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh."

—*Epistle.*



ONE of the few ideas common to the human race in all ages is that of the necessity of sacrifice for sin. We know not whether this feeling of obligation has arisen from the universal conscience, or whether it is one of those great truths, retained through the lapse of ages, and dating back to the days of our first parents and their first sin. We are led to believe that God Himself instituted bloody sacrifices immediately after the fall, as if at once to impress upon the minds of His guilty subjects that "without shedding of blood is no remission;" and to point them on by faith to "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

But of what avail was "the blood of bulls and of goats" to the ancient Israelite? "It is not possible," says the Apostle, "that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Its value extended only to outward privileges. The removal of ceremonial uncleanness, release from temporal punishment, admission to the "worldly sanctuary," these were all it had of value. And yet so rigid was God in maintaining bloody sacrifices, that the worship of

the sanctuary must be daily hallowed by blood. Its doors could only be opened to the worshiper by the offering of blood. The penitent must present himself before God through the shedding of blood. Even the high priest dared not appear before the mercy-seat without a "sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the people's."

Yet all this blood, running from the altar like water, could never "make the comers thereunto perfect." What, then, was its design? Doubtless these onerous, costly, and numerous rites were to remind the offerers of the burden and guilt of sin, and by their insufficiency to bring peace to the conscience, to point to that better Sacrifice which, in the fullness of time, was to take away the sins of the world by offering Himself, the innocent for the guilty.

"No bleeding bird, nor bleeding beast,  
Nor hyssop branch, nor sprinkling priest,  
Nor running brook, nor flood, nor sea,  
Can wash the dismal stain away.

"Jesus, my God, Thy blood alone  
Hath power sufficient to atone;  
Thy blood can make me white as snow:  
No Jewish types can make me so."



"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## TUESDAY EVENING.

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"—*Epistle.*



THE blood of bulls and of goats served only for the "purifying of the flesh;" but the blood of Jesus is so rich, so prevailing, so efficacious, that it cleanses even the heart and conscience, and lifts from the penitent believer's soul the heavy load of condemnation. So precious is the blood of Christ, that it suffices for the removal of the guilt of the whole world. Though each of the myriads of the human race had been guilty of transgressions numerous as the sand upon the seashore, there is virtue in that blood to cleanse them all. Through faith in it, every redeemed soul, from Adam down to the last saint who shall enter Paradise, has found safety. The old Israelite laid his hand on the head of the atoning lamb, and, confessing his sins over it, transferred them, as it were, to the innocent victim that was to suffer in his stead the death which he felt his sins deserved. But his faith looked forward through the dim future to the great sacrifice which that lamb typified, and which he knew was in some mysterious way to accomplish his deliverance. And the believer now, in the light

of the cross of Christ, no longer dimly foreshadowed by type and symbol, but plainly revealed through the Gospel, looks up to God as a reconciled Father, and sees his guilt removed.

But this precious blood does more than remove the burden of guilt from the heart, it purges the "conscience from dead works to serve the living God." It is not possible for a man to look upon that bleeding Victim suspended upon the cross, with a realizing sense that Jesus died for *him*, without having his heart touched with a sense of grateful love. Nor can he be satisfied with mere emotional sensibility. His gratitude will give expression to his outward life, and mould his whole being, day by day, into a more perfect copy of the divine original.

"Father, Thy Son hath poured  
His life-blood on this earth,  
To cleanse away our guilt and stains,  
To give us second birth;  
To give us second birth,  
From sin to set us free.  
Give glory to Thy Son, O Lord!  
Put honor on that name of names,  
By cleansing me."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## WEDNESDAY MORNING.

“He is the Mediator of the New Testament.”—*Epistle.*



“MEDIATOR is not a mediator of one,” says the Apostle. This office implies a state of variance between two parties, whom it is the business of the mediator to reconcile. Thus Christ is set forth as holding this relation between God and man. Not that God has offended man, but that man has seriously, deeply offended God, by sinning against Him. Let us, in our morning’s meditation, consider what is necessary in one who would make peace between heaven and earth.

He must be *man*. The same nature that sinned must make satisfaction for that sin. The same nature that broke the law must redeem it from dishonor by obedience to it. The same nature which incurred the sentence of death must endure that penalty to its full extent. None but a man could enterfully into the wants and sorrows of our human nature, and “be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” None but a pure and holy man, who could offer himself “without spot to God,” could dare to undertake to reconcile God and His creature.

But he must also be *God*. A mediator between

two parties at variance should be equal in dignity to the highest. He must be under no obligation to the law on his own account. No created being, even though he were the loftiest archangel, could do more than obey the law perfectly for himself. He would have nothing to spare toward liquidating the debt of the millions upon millions of the guilty race of man. So that we are shut up to the alternative, either that we have no mediator, or that our mediator is God Himself. "If He were God and not man, we would approach Him with fear and dread; if He were man and not God, we should be guilty of idolatry to worship and trust in Him at all."

While, then, we rejoice in Jesus, and with grateful adoration give thanks to Him for His obedience and sufferings in our behalf, let us beware lest we dishonor Him, and make His mediation practically of no effect, by uniting with it any trust in human merit, or priestly or angelic intercession.

"Then must a Mediator plead,  
Who God and man may both embrace;  
With God for man to intercede,  
And offer man the purchased grace.

"And lo! the Son of God is slain,  
To be this Mediator crowned;  
In Him my soul, be cleansed from stain,  
In Him thy righteousness be found!"

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## WEDNESDAY EVENING.

“That by means of death, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”—*Epistle.*



WHO are the “called,” to whom the death of Christ secures “the promise of eternal inheritance”? No one may penetrate the divine decrees and see his name inscribed on the fair page of the book of life; but God has given us certain marks by which we may discover whether it is there. If, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, we have been made willing in the day of God’s power; if we have felt sin to be a burden too heavy to be borne; if we have heard the voice of Jesus calling, “Come unto me;” if we have listened to the call, and gladly embraced His gracious invitation, laying our load of guilt upon Him, and taking in exchange His light and easy yoke; if we are now following in the way of His commandments, and bowing our wills to His perfect law, then we may assure our hearts of our interest in this glorious “promise.”

Without these marks being seen, at least, to some extent, it is fatal presumption to claim an interest in the “eternal inheritance.” “If, as the Article expresses it, ‘Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God,’ concerning you ‘whom He hath

chosen in Christ out of mankind,' it is equally His everlasting purpose 'that you should be holy and without blame before Him in love.' No man ever was or can be elected to the end, who was not elected in the way which leads to it; no man who is not walking, while on earth, in the strait and narrow way which alone leads to heaven, can ever hope to be ultimately found in that heaven, the gate of which, though 'wide enough to admit the greatest sinner, is too narrow to admit the smallest sin.'"

But let not such thoughts as these discourage the young Christian, or one, who though not able as yet to call himself a Christian, is struggling with the chains which have so long bound him, and longing to free himself from their power. These very longings and desires and reachings of the soul after God are proofs of the presence and power of the Holy Ghost; and, if encouraged and obeyed, will end in an effectual calling unto eternal life.

"Stamp Thine own image, bright and clear,  
Deep in my soul; O God! be near!

Give the strong faith-shield unto me;  
And when I fail, forgive and spare.

Let Thy sweet grace within me bear

Fruits of the Spirit, unto Thee—

Courage and peace none can destroy,  
And meekness, patience, and pure joy."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## THURSDAY MORNING.

"Which of you convinceth me of sin?"—*Gospel.*



OUR thoughts this morning turn to Christ in the temple. He is surrounded by His enemies. They goad Him on, that He may entrap Himself by some rash action or remark. He stands like the stag brought to bay by the hounds which attack him from every side. Well might he cry, "Dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me." Yet not for one moment does He quail before them. In the majesty of conscious virtue He hurls forth the challenge, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Who will accept it? Here were men thirsting for His blood; men who would give all they possessed to prove Him criminal. His life had been a public one. His steps had been tracked through the streets of Jerusalem, by the shores of Gennesaret, and on the mountain side. Even the privacy which He had occasionally sought, to escape the malice of His enemies or to refresh wearied nature, had been intruded upon. Neither had He made any attempt to conceal his opinions. "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing." There

had been yet a closer spy upon His actions. Judas had accompanied him in all his journeyings; he had been admitted into the most intimate intercourse with him. For three years he had followed Christ's steps, observed His actions, listened to His teachings in public and in private. The Saviour knew that he, whom he had before pronounced "a devil," was soon to become His betrayer. Yet even in his presence He dared to say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"

And He who could stand before God and man in the virtue of His own unspotted sinlessness is willing to become our righteousness. In exchange for the poor, "filthy rags" of our own merits He offers us that glorious robe which will cover all our guilt and make us pure and lovely, even in the sight of God Himself. Who is willing now to cast away his own polluted and sin-spotted raiment, that he may be clothed in a robe "made white in the blood of the Lamb"?

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.

"When from the dust of earth I rise,  
To claim my mansion in the skies,  
E'en then shall this be all my plea,  
'Jesus hath lived and died for me.'"



"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me"

## THURSDAY EVENING.

"If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?"—*Gospel.*



CHRIST had thrown down the gauntlet, but no one had taken it up. Not a soul in all that throng, thirsting for His blood, had been able to convince him of a single sin. He had given them an opportunity to condemn him, which they would gladly have embraced. He had given them a challenge which, could they have accepted, would have relieved them from His odious presence and teachings forever. Yet they were silent. Many false teachers had appeared before, but their impostures had always been easily detected. If Christ was one of them, now was the time to prove it, either by the inconsistency of His doctrine with the principles of virtue and the teachings of the Scriptures, or by the inconsistency of His life. They could do neither. Fairly, then, does Christ condemn them again, as so often before, by their own admissions, and press home the question, If you can not prove me in the wrong, "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" And then, with the deepest solemnity, He added, "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."

Here is the great secret of all infidelity. Men do

not want to be convinced. They shut their ears to whatever condemns their evil lives. It is not that sufficient argument is lacking; but their minds are blinded by sin, and they will not see its force. "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

This prejudice against the truth, and Him who proclaims it, is one of the saddest and most hopeless signs of a man's moral and spiritual condition. How earnestly should we pray for a candid mind, free from prejudice, and willing to be taught! How diligently should we seek the instructions of the "Spirit of truth," and pray, "From hardness of heart and contempt of Thy word and commandment, good Lord, deliver us!"

Oh! for a stronger faith  
To look within the vail,  
To credit what my Saviour saith,  
Whose word can never fail.

'I cast my care on Thee,  
I triumph and adore;  
Henceforth my great concern shall be  
To love and please Thee more."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## FRIDAY MORNING.

“Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil.”—*Gospel.*



CHRIST had put His enemies to the alternative, either to prove Him wrong or to believe in Him. They could not do the first; they would not do the second. So now they turn upon Him with vile reproach, hoping to overthrow that cause by abuse which they were unable to destroy by argument.

“Thou art a Samaritan”! They did not mean that He was really of that nation; for had He been, they would have driven Him from the temple, into which no one of that race dared enter. But it was the most contemptuous term they could apply, and one best calculated to lower Him in the estimation of the people. “Thou hast a devil”! Whether meaning that He was in league with Satan, or that His words were but the incoherent ravings of one under demoniacal possession, their object was to destroy the weight of credit which might attach to His words, and prevent the common people from embracing His cause. And as though even this plunge were not deep enough, they must descend still further, by glorying in what was their deepest condemnation. “Say we not *well*?” Oh! how awful is that wickedness which impiously attri-

butes the divine works to Satanic agency! Is not this the very sin against the Holy Ghost for which there is no forgiveness? That sin unto death for which we have no warrant to pray?

“The disciple is not above his Master.” The same spirit of antichrist pursued the Apostles to prison and to death, and is abroad in the world now. Where is the Christian who has ever taken a bold stand for God before his fellow-men that has not been abused? His motives have been impugned, his character assailed; even his sanity has been called in question. But shall he be silent because the wicked blaspheme? Shall he retire from the field because the enemy is abroad? Shall he choose ease rather than suffering when his Master’s cause is imperiled, and Satan’s hosts are striving to overthrow it? “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, *happy* are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.”

“What! was the promise made to thee alone?

Art thou the excepted one?

An heir of glory without grief or pain?

O vision false and vain!

There lies thy cross! Beneath it meekly bow!

It fits thy stature now;

Who scornful pass it with averted eye,

’Twill crush them by and by.”

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## FRIDAY EVENING.

"I seek not mine own glory."—*Gospel.*



AD Christ desired, by the life of poverty and humiliation which He chose for Himself, to carve out a road to worldly honor, He might indeed have been justly thought deranged. A life of purity and love, of self-denying efforts for the well-being of his fellow-men; a life which seeks to rouse men from base passions and sordid interests, to what is noble, lofty, and sublime, may be admired in the abstract; but it has never yet appeared on the stage of this world without meeting with opprobrium and contempt. He who seeks his own glory will strive for the laurels of the conqueror, the orator, the statesman; but never of the Christian.

In these words we have the device which should be emblazoned on the banner of every soldier of the Cross, "I seek not mine own glory." When the Christian enters upon the divine life, he renounces *self* as well as *sin*. He enters the service of a new Master. He brings his time, talents, and possessions, and lays them at the Saviour's feet. He confesses that he is no longer his own, and he pledges himself to unreserved devotion in his Master's cause. Henceforth his whole aim in life is changed. No

longer does he strive to seek out his own glory; to make for himself riches or fame. "What wilt *Thou* have me to do?" is his earnest question; and that question once answered, nothing can move him from his purpose. "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

May the heroic spirit of St. Paul animate our hearts! May we feel that the cause of Christ is dearer to us than our lives; that obedience to His will is sweeter than the highest honors which this earth can give. Whether He calls us to serve Him in lowly acts of love and self-denial, or in those greater ones of which the world takes cognizance, may this thought hallow every duty, "I am doing it, Lord, for Thee."

"Go, labor on! spend and be spent—  
Thy joy to do the Father's will;  
It is the way the Master went;  
Should not the servant tread it still?"

"Go, labor on! 'tis not for naught;  
Thy earthly loss is heavenly gain.  
Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not;  
The Master praises—what are men?"

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## SATURDAY MORNING.

"If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death."—*Gospel.*



THE Pharisees met the declaration with derisive unbelief. They had denied Christ's authority, ridiculed His pretensions, insulted Him with opprobrious epithets, and charged Him with being under the influence of Satan, in order to ward off the truth from their own souls, and prevent it from gaining access to other hearts. Now they exult. They think they hear, indeed, the words of frenzy. "Now we *know* that Thou hast a devil."

Yet though they scorned and rejected this word of Christ, we know it to be one of the most precious, most comforting truths which He ever spoke. Abraham and indeed all; and the prophets; and the long train of mortality, from Adam down to the last soul that shall wing its flight from its frail tenement of clay, must pass through the dark shades of death. Yet this is not what Jesus means. The inspired writers rarely call the dissolution of the soul and body *death*. When the immortal spirit has left its earthly abode, and we deposit the corruptible remains beneath the clods of the valley, the Scripture teaches us to call this state "*sleep*"—the quiet rest-

ing time until the day of resurrection. "They which *sleep* in the dust of the earth shall awake." "Our friend Lazarus *sleepeth*." "We who are alive and remain shall not prevent those that are *asleep*." What Christ means here by *death* is the death of the soul—that death pronounced upon Adam when God said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Ah! this is far more than the return of "ashes to ashes, dust to dust." It is the death unto God, unto holiness, unto heaven. It is the extinction of all hope; the darkness of despair; the torments of the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never shall be quenched; the companionship of the lost spirits in hell; the cry for mercy that falls upon empty air; the call for a drop of cold water over that gulf which never can be crossed. This is what that soul shall *never* taste which keeps the sayings of Jesus. O blessed hope! O happy lot! O glorious prospect of the servant of Christ! Is it yours?

"It is not death to die—  
To leave this weary road,  
And, 'midst the brotherhood on high,  
To be at home with God.

"Jesus, Thou Prince of Life,  
Thy chosen can not die;  
Like Thee, they conquer in the strife,  
To reign with Thee on high."



"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## SATURDAY EVENING.

"I AM."—*Gospel.*



It is difficult to conceive how any candid mind can fail to see in these words the most unequivocal declaration of our Lord's divinity. He here claims not only an existence prior to that of Abraham, but assumes the peculiar title by which Jehovah revealed Himself to Moses. Bishop Beveridge remarks on this passage: "Had the existence of our Blessed Saviour been measured by time, as is that of all created beings, He must have said, Before Abraham was, *I was*; but the words are, Before Abraham was, *I am*; thus using the same expression of Himself, which the Eternal God does at Exodus 3: 14, and hereby demonstrating Himself to be the same God who then said, 'I AM THAT I AM!'" And thus the Jews understood Him; for, filled with rage, they attempted to stone Him for blasphemy.

But there is another thought connected with this title, very rich in spiritual meaning. It is as though the Master had called Himself by an *unfinished name*, so that His people might supply the blank according to their need. Is any one living in sin forgetful of that "judgment-seat of Christ," before which we must all appear? Jesus warns him, "I

AM—*He which searcheth the reins and hearts.*” Is any conscience-stricken sinner weeping under a sense of guilt which seems too great for even God’s mercy to remove? Jesus says, “I AM—*He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*” Is any Christian trembling in the conflict of life, and weary of struggling against the foes that beset him on every side? Jesus says, “I AM—*thy Shield, and thy exceeding great Reward.*”

How wonderful is this love of Christ to our weak, sin-sick, timid, weary souls! He lays open the treasury of heaven, the inexhaustible riches of His fullness, the whole power of His Godhead, and bids us take freely a supply for every want. Let us come boldly, then, and draw grace for every time of need. To doubt, to question, to refuse, after such an invitation, is to cast dishonor and contempt on our most merciful, most loving God and Saviour.

“Thou bidd’st us call, and giv’st us many a name,  
That Thou may’st hear and answer every cry;  
But—for the wants of all are not the same—  
Another name Thy wondrous love did try;  
To Moses first Thou gav’st it, and he knew  
Its worth, and taught us how to prize it, too:  
‘I AM’—let every sinner kneel and thank  
The Lord, and with his wants fill up the blank.  
Thy very wounds do say, each drop they bleed,  
‘I AM thy need.’”

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER.

### MORNING.

“The example of His great humility.”—*Collect.*



OUR Church does not keep Palm Sunday. The incidents connected with the Saviour's single assumption of pomp and majesty are appointed for Advent meditation. To-day we are called to begin with Jesus the painful ascent to the Cross. To-day we chant the first strains of the *Miserere*, and catch the first mutterings of the storm that is soon to break upon His devoted head. Not triumph, but humiliation, is the thought the Church puts into our hearts to-day. Oh! may we give earnest heed to the lesson, the hardest lesson for proud man to learn. Nor can we fail, if we follow the teachings of the Church aright. If we view God the Father in His “tender love toward mankind,” sending His Son “to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the Cross”—if we view God the Son, leaving the bosom of the Father, stepping from the throne of eternity, and laying aside His radiant glory, for a garb of flesh, a life of poverty and shame, a death of agony, must not the contemptible pride of the human heart be abased in

contrast with such humility as this? We give Thee "most humble and hearty thanks," O blessed Jesus! that thou didst humble Thyself, "even to the death upon the Cross, for us, miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death," that Thou might'st "make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life."

But how, O blessed Lord! can we, worms of the dust, follow the example of such humility as Thine? We can lay aside no glory, for we possess none. We can stoop to no lower position, for the lowest is our only proper place. We can assume no voluntary sufferings, for Thou hast done and suffered all. We can only with a glad and grateful heart praise Thee for what Thou hast done, and accept the mercy Thou hast purchased for us at so costly a price. To Thee, therefore, will we give as we are most bounden, continual thanks; submitting ourselves wholly to Thy holy will and pleasure, and studying to serve Thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.

"What language shall I borrow,  
To thank Thee, dearest Friend,  
For this, Thy dying sorrow,  
Thy pity without end?  
Oh! make me Thine forever,  
And should I fainting be,  
Lord, let me never, never,  
Outlive my love to Thee."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER.

NOON.

"Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."—*Epistle*.



WHO will not blush to speak of making sacrifices for Christ, after reading this story of redeeming grace? That Christian is but little affected by the power of a Saviour's love, who prefers to dwell upon what he has renounced for Christ, rather than what Christ has relinquished for him. Who made more sacrifices for his Lord than Paul? yet how he rings out the notes of triumph on this very theme! "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: *for whom I have suffered the loss of all things.*" Oh! that we were imitators of St. Paul. Oh! that we could excite in these cold, sluggish hearts of ours, that tremble and draw back at the very mention of sacrifice, something of the holy enthusiasm that fired the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Oh! that the record of his labors, his self-denial, his sufferings, borne so

nobly, endured so uncomplainingly, rejoiced in so triumphantly, might shame our cowardly, indolent spirits into something of activity and zeal! Or, rather, would that we could become filled with the power of a Saviour's sacrifice, as we contemplate Him "in the form of God"—the "equal with God"—"the Man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts"—emptying Himself of all His glory, serving in the garb of flesh, suffering, agonizing, dying, that we might be exalted.

But this spirit can only be gained by living close to Jesus. While we stand aloof from Him, or only grasp Him with a feeble hand, our love will be cold, our faith weak, our labors in His cause few and trivial. But when, realizing our helplessness, we cling to Him with all the energy of our soul, He imparts Himself to our spirits, and inspires us to do and suffer boldly for His name.

"Mortal! if life smile on thee, and thou find  
All to thy mind,  
Think who did once from heaven to hell descend,  
Thee to befriend;  
So shalt thou dare forego, at His dear call,  
Thy best, thine all."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER.

EVENING.

“The price of blood.”—*Gospel.*

**I**D the face of the earth ever, before or since, witness such a transaction as had passed between Judas and the chief priests? The blood of the Son of God had been bought and sold. Thirty pieces of silver had been accepted as its value. Well might the prophet exclaim in sublime irony, “A goodly price that I was prized at of them”! What contempt they put upon it. “It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury.” They had doubtless taken the money from the treasury to purchase His death. Why should they hesitate to return it thither when the deed was accomplished? Did they consider the blood of Christ of no more value than that of a dog, which was forbidden to be brought into the house of the Lord?

So men esteemed it. But what a different value does God put upon it! In His sight it is so priceless that not all the wealth of the mightiest monarch could buy a single drop. Sprinkled upon the conscience of the believing penitent, the deepest dyed transgressors became white as snow. Through

its efficacy alone does any soul enter the portals of heaven, while the preciousness of this blood forms the burden of the everlasting song of the redeemed.

So precious does God esteem it, that those who slight it are forever shut out from hope of mercy and forgiveness. We shudder as we hear the raging multitude around the Saviour cry, "His blood be on us and on our children;" for we know that the blood of Christ is on them, not to save, but to destroy; and thus it shall remain until they learn to call on Him "whom they have pierced," and "mourn as one mourneth for his only son."

What value do you set upon this blood? Is it worth more to you than to the chief priests? See to it that your estimate of it is the same as God's; for wo to him who neglects or despises what God sets so high, or counts the blood of Jesus "an unholy thing"!

"There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains.

"Dear, dying Lamb! Thy precious blood  
Shall never lose its power,  
Till all the ransomed Church of God  
Be saved, to sin no more."



“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## MONDAY BEFORE EASTER.

MORNING.

“I have trodden the wine-press alone.”—*Epistle.*



T was one of the peculiar trials of our blessed Lord that He was so entirely without human sympathy; yet it is one which we seldom take into consideration.

Christ was emphatically *alone*. As a child, He was not understood even by His mother; neither were those who, in after years, were admitted to His most intimate companionship, able to comprehend Him.

When we consider His character and His work, we see how this must be. He was sinless amid sinners. He shrank from impurity and unholiness with all the instinctive loathing of His pure and holy nature, while it was pressing upon him on every side, and dwelling even in the hearts of those He most loved on earth. His breast was filled with high and heavenly purposes, yet He mingled in daily association with those who so grossly misunderstood Him, that even a chosen disciple dared to rebuke Him.

Nor had He any more of sympathy in His work. He fought the tempter *alone*. He agonized in Gethsemane *alone*. When arrested in the garden, His

trembling disciples fled and left Him *alone*. Before the Sanhedrim, Pilate, Herod, He stood *alone*. Not a single voice was raised in His defense among all the multitude He had relieved and blessed. But on the cross even His Father withdrew Himself, and left Him to endure *alone* the weight of a world's transgression. That desertion wrung His heart beyond all else, and forced from Him that bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast *Thou* forsaken me?"

Is any Christian grieving for the want of human fellowship and sympathy? Is any child of God doomed to go through life misunderstood and unappreciated? Remember who trod the wine-press *alone*. And remember, too, that this same Jesus who lived and suffered, and died alone, is now the *ever-present* friend of His people. Into His ear they can pour their sorrows, assured of His supporting sympathy in life and death.

"Thou dost remember, amidst all  
The glories of Thy throne,  
The sorrows of humanity,  
For they were once Thine own.

"Yes, and as if 'Thou would'st be God,  
Even in misery,  
Thou'st left no sorrow but Thine own  
Untouched by sympathy."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## MONDAY BEFORE EASTER.

NOON.

"There came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head."—*Gospel*.



AS this woman the "sinner" mentioned by St. Luke? or was she Mary, the sister of Lazarus, spoken of by John? or different from either? We know not. Scripture, while it has immortalized the deed, has been silent as to the name, and thus taught us the lesson that, in Christ's estimate, our actions rather than our persons are what He values.

It was an act of holy love—an answer to the question, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" An evidence of that gratitude which filled her heart and could not be restrained from outward manifestation—a fulfillment of the song of the Church, "While the King sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." Why should objection be raised because it was "very precious"? Was it not on that very account more fit to be bestowed on Him who had anointed her with salvation?

Hers was a typical act. In this woman, the Church renders to Christ her tribute of grateful

love, and shows that naught but what is "very precious," is worthy of being offered to our King. In vain shall any bring "that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick," as an offering unto the Lord. "Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing." Love will not be satisfied with a mean offering. The best, the dearest, the most precious thing will alone give expression to the heart's devotion; and that Christian who professes to love Jesus, and yet is ever counting the cost, and striving to find how *little* he can render unto the Lord, may be like the murmurers "that had indignation within themselves" at what they chose to consider this woman's extravagance; but they will never gain from Christ the precious testimony of His approving love.

"Love on the Saviour's dying head

Her spikenard-drops unblamed may pour;

May mount His cross, and wrap Him, dead,

In spices from the golden shore;

For love delights to bring her best,

And where love is, that offering evermore is blest."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## MONDAY BEFORE EASTER.

EVENING.

"She hath done what she could."—*Gospel.*

**S**URELY the religion of Christ was made for the poor. Paganism and popery may offer the eternal rewards for money; but only the Gospel of Christ places them within the equal reach of all. Who need despair with this sentence before his eyes? Who need fail of the rewards of eternal blessedness who simply and earnestly does what he can for his Lord? And what encouragement do these words convey to the heart. Man may misunderstand. Man may impute false motives to the purest acts. Man may charge as evil what was meant only for good. We can bear misconstruction, slander, and reproach if, like this woman, our Lord will say of us, "She hath done what she could."

This judgment places all on a common level. It reckons with each according to his opportunities. The richest, the poorest, the wisest, the most ignorant, the mightiest, the feeblest, shall each receive the same recompense, if of each it can be said, "She hath done what she could."

How this thought beautifies the most homely

service! How it dignifies the humblest effort! Who shall exalt himself if he is to be held responsible for every opportunity? Who shall despair if nothing is exacted greater than his ability to perform? Yet, upon the lowly as well as the great rests an equal responsibility to improve the talents, be they few or many, which God has given us. To every soul life is a sacred trust. Each hour, as it approaches, brings its own peculiar duty; each moment something to do or bear for Christ.

O blessed Saviour! how can we thank Thee sufficiently, that Thou art so merciful in Thy requirements—that Thou wilt bless with equal blessing the cup of cold water offered in Thy name, and the treasures of wealth poured out in Thy service? Give us grace so to improve the opportunities granted by Thy love, that of each it may be said at the last, “She hath done what she could.”

“ Then the little thou hast done—  
Little battles thou hast won,  
Little words in love expressed,  
Little wrongs at once confessed,  
Little favors kindly done,  
Little toils thou didst not shun,  
Little graces meekly worn,  
Little slights with patience borne—  
These to thee shall all be given  
For thy heritage in heaven.”

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## TUESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

MORNING.

"Therefore have I set my face like a flint."—*Epistle.*



WERE it possible for our life's panorama to be displayed before us, with its cares, its toils, its sufferings, its losses, its bitter sorrows, no one could endure the sight. From that moment every prospective grief would cast its dark shadow on our pathway, until all the sunlight of the present would be swallowed up in gloom. In great mercy is it, therefore, that God has spread a vail over the future—that we "know not what shall be on the morrow."

But from the time when the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" had set apart Christ to be the Saviour of the whole world, every event of that suffering life was known to His omniscient mind. He suffered not as men suffer, bearing the present evil, but in blissful ignorance of the future. All, all, was known to Him. Yet, with undaunted resolution, He pursued His life on earth, bearing the cross even from His birth. It was needful that He should know all, else might He not have been a willing sacrifice. But knowing all, the cross grew heavier, day by day, until it wrung from his agonized frame blood and bitter cries.

Did you ever think what would have been our condition had Christ not set His face "like a flint"? If the taunts and malice of His enemies, or the ingratitude of His friends, or the baptism of suffering and blood, which He had to endure, had moved Him from His purpose, that moment we had been utterly, irretrievably lost. When, in Gethsemane, that bitter cry was wrung from His burdened soul, "O my Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," the world's salvation trembled in the balance. How can we thank Thee, O our Saviour! that even such sufferings had no power to turn Thee from Thy purpose; that even in this hour of agony, Thou didst set thy face "like a flint," and say, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." So give us grace to set our faces against that monstrous evil which brought the Son of God from heaven to suffer and to die.

"O silent Lamb! for me Thou hast endured,  
Jesus, Thou holy, perfect, sinless One!  
Thy grief and bitter anguish have secured  
My soul's salvation when this race is run.  
Then let me to Thine image true  
Thus meekly suffer with the crown in view."



"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## TUESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

NOON.

"The chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes, and the whole council."—*Gospel*.



CHRIST trod the wine-press *alone* ; but His enemies were *united as one man*. Pharisee and Sadducee, priest and scribe, Herod and Pilate, all laid aside their mutual animosities to unite in crushing the innocent. "It is expedient that one man should die for the people," said Caiaphas, speaking not of himself, but unwittingly uttering the truth of God. And the whole power of Jew and Gentile was put forth to accomplish this result. With what eager and bitter malice they urged on his death, resorting to any means, however iniquitous, which would bring about the execution of their plans. When the false witnesses whom they had suborned contradicted themselves, they endeavored to lay hold on His own words. When the charge of blasphemy fell to the ground before Pilate, they easily shifted the accusation to sedition against the Roman authority. Well might the prophet say, "Many bulls have compassed me : strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion."

What a view of the wickedness of the human heart does this scene open before us! Do we flatter ourselves that we would not thus have combined against Him? What protest are we now making against that spirit of opposition to Christ which is ever raging in the world? Can it clearly be seen by all whose cause we espouse? Do we never side with the world, or weakly hide our convictions for fear of that "world's dread laugh"? If so, we have no reason to suppose that we would have stood alone against the current of hatred toward Christ, which was rushing that day through the streets of Jerusalem.

Let this thought humble us exceedingly, and bring us in deeper repentance to the feet of that Saviour who meekly "endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself," that He might open a way by which these very sinners could return to God.

"I see the crowd in Pilate's hall,  
I mark their wrathful mien;  
Their shouts of "Crucify!" appall,  
With blasphemy between.

"And of that shouting multitude  
I feel that I am one;  
And in that din of voices rude,  
I recognize my own."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## TUESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

EVENING.

"But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them."—*Gospel*.



ILATE sought to release Christ. Convinced of His innocence, reiterating it again and again, washing his hands before the multitude to absolve himself from any share in the blame of His condemnation, he yet betrays a cowardly, time-serving spirit, in not at once acquitting Him. Finding that he could do nothing with the rulers, he appeals to the people, and seeks to profit by an established custom to secure the release of Jesus. He was convinced that in their hearts, the chief priests knew no guilt of Him. He remembered the *Hosannas* that had greeted His entrance into Jerusalem. He believed that the popular heart was with Christ, and that, if opportunity was offered them, they would again declare for Him who but a few days before had been the idol of the hour. To make assurance doubly sure, as it would seem, he chooses, as the alternative to Jesus, a man lying under condemnation for sedition, robbery, and murder; probably the greatest villain that was confined at that time within the prison walls. "Whether of

the twain will ye that I release unto you ?” It may be that Christ and Barabbas—the innocent and the guilty, stood before the multitude, side by side ; the One pure and holy as heaven’s own light ; the other wearing the sullen scowl of crime and hate. “Not this Man, but Barabbas !” was the cry that struck upon the amazed and terrified Pilate. He had no courage to oppose that bloodthirsty mob. He was willing to do justice, but he would not compromise himself. “He delivered Jesus to their will.”

We can not comprehend it ; and our souls are filled with indignation against Pilate and the fickle multitude. Oh ! let us turn from them and look within. If we search our own hearts and lives with the candle of the Lord, mortification and remorse must fill our breasts, for the many times we, like these wicked Jews, have preferred Barabbas to Christ.

“Even so, the world is thronging round to gaze  
On the dread vision of the latter days ;  
Constrained to own Thee, but in heart  
Prepared to take Barabbas’ part ;  
‘Hosanna !’ now—to-morrow, ‘Crucify !’  
The changeful burden still of their rude, lawless cry.”

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.”

## WEDNESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

MORNING.

“Christ was once offered.”—*Epistle.*



THE Apostle's argument in these chapters goes to show the immense superiority of the sacrifice of Christ over all the offerings made under the law of Moses. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Such sacrifices served rather as a confession than an expiation of guilt. They were not only not of the same nature as the sinner, but vastly inferior; nor did the lamb brought to the slaughter come as a voluntary victim, to suffer in man's stead. Such sacrifices, therefore, could not in any sense answer the purpose of atonement; for they could neither do away with the guilt of sin, nor with its power over the individual conscience. They must be continually repeated, as the offerer continually fell into transgression. Thus instead of the worshippers having "no more conscience of sin," "in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year."

But in the sacrifice of Christ, atonement for sin is actually made by One in our nature, voluntarily assuming our guilt, and making expiation for it by the

sacrifice of Himself. When Christ hung upon the Cross, He blotted "out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." By faith we see our own indictment fastened there, the record against us all blotted out by these precious drops of blood. What offering then remains? None. The atonement is complete, the ransom paid, the substitution perfect. The infinite dignity of the Sufferer has made His "one offering" of such inestimable value, that it suffices for the guilt of the innumerable millions that have made this earth their home.

The believer in Christ needs, therefore, no new atonement for his sins, however oft repeated; but a continued application to that same precious fountain, once for all opened upon the cross. "There is no opening for another victim, there is no possibility of another sacrifice."

"My soul looks back to see  
The burdens Thou didst bear,  
When hanging on the cursed tree,  
And hopes her guilt was there.

"Believing, we rejoice  
To see the curse remove;  
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,  
And sing His bleeding love."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## WEDNESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

NOON.

"Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"—*Gospel.*



HERE is in every heart some bosom sin, which, if cherished and indulged, becomes like the letting out of water. Its power increases until the whole man yields to its control, and reason and conscience fall before it. In Judas this sin was covetousness. Concealed, perhaps, at first from himself, it needed but opportunity to develop its power. That opportunity was afforded, for Judas "had the bag." He stole the money of the poor. Yet, with consummate art, he pretends indignation at Mary's offering, and demands, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" No doubt his real indignation was excited because he was deprived of a share of its value.

Nor is it difficult to see how such a sin may grow upon a man. With every yielding to it, the voice of conscience is deadened; while the eager thirst for gratification increases until it becomes insatiable, and the man is ready to plunge into crimes from which he would once have recoiled with horror.

There was pity still in the Saviour's heart, even

for the "traitor." There was hope in this warning question. The hand of Jesus might yet have raised him from the abyss into which he had plunged. But there was no response in the heart of Judas. He had lost his power to believe, to love. Henceforth there remained nothing for him but the agony of that despair which began when he cried out before the chief priests, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."

Let no man suppose that he can allow himself indulgence in any secret sin, and retain the power to check it when he will. He, who in ease and carnal security, presses forward in forbidden paths, will at last find that, when he would fain turn and retrace his steps, he *can not* go back. Sin holds him with too tight a grasp, and in despair he plunges headlong into the abyss.

"Mine own apostle, who the bag did bear,  
Though he had all I had, did not forbear  
To sell *Me* also, and to put me there—  
Was ever grief like mine ?

"Judas, dost thou betray me with a kiss ?  
Canst thou find hell about my lips, and miss  
Of life just at the gates of life and bliss ?  
Was ever grief like mine ?"




"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## WEDNESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

EVENING.

"Peter went out, and wept bitterly."—*Gospel.*

UDAS could meet the Saviour's eye, imprint a kiss upon His cheek, and hand Him over to His enemies. But Peter melted under the look of Christ; his heart broke with its agony of sorrow, and he went out from the presence of the mocking crowd to weep bitterly over his sin. No excuse can be pleaded for Peter's crime. It proceeded from an overweening self-confidence—an undue trust to that very love for Christ which was the main-spring of his life, and which afterward, when strengthened by the Saviour's prayer, filled his soul with burning, quenchless zeal.

We wonder at Peter's fall. We wonder that one who loved the Saviour as we know he did could so cruelly desert Him in His hour of need, and deny Him to His very face even with oaths and curses. Would we have done differently? The prayerful examination of our own lives often reveals to us passages which we would willingly forget. Does such review of the past, O Christian! bring to your recollection no time when you acted Peter's part,

perhaps with less provocation? When, amid the giddy or the scoffing throng, you were ashamed to stand forth and say, "I am a Christian; it is my Lord and Master whom you are reviling"? Alas for poor, sinful human nature, that can judge so stringently the faults of others, and veil so successfully its own.

Yet there are times when the heart sees itself in its true light, and humbled in the dust, cries, "Woe is me, for I am undone!" How precious at such an hour, when the soul well-nigh despairs, if there is any mercy that can reach its case! How precious is the history of Peter's fall and Peter's repentance! There is not a page of Holy Writ more full of comfort to the guilty soul. With this story of sin, of penitence, and of forgiving love before him, who can despair? Surely there is no depth of guilt from which the love of Jesus can not raise the contrite sinner.

"Beware of Peter's word,  
Nor confidently say,  
'I never will deny my Lord,'  
But, 'Grant I never may.'"

"Man's wisdom is to seek  
His strength in God alone,  
And e'en an angel would be weak  
Who trusted in his own."

“He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.

## THURSDAY BEFORE EASTER.

MORNING.

“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.”—*Epistle.*



HOEVER will ponder with attention the “Exhortation” appointed to be read, “When the minister giveth warning for the celebration of the Holy Communion,” will perceive how strenuously our scriptural Church insists upon the self-examination and preparation enjoined by St. Paul. Nor is she satisfied with generally commanding the duty. She also gives special directions how it shall be performed; so that no one need be in error in this matter, or excuse himself on the plea of ignorance. Four points are particularly presented to the notice of the communicant: *Repentance for sins past; a lively and steadfast faith in Christ; amendment of life; and charity with all the world.* He who, after such warnings and instructions, goes to the holy communion with a careless, worldly heart, incurs “the great peril of the unworthy receiving thereof.”

Still further to instruct us in our duty, the Church requires that “At the time of the celebration of the holy communion, the priest shall say this exhortation: ‘Dearly beloved in the Lord, ye who mind

to come to the holy communion of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ, must consider how St. Paul exhorteth all persons diligently to try and examine themselves, before they presume to eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup. For as the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament; so is the danger great if we receive the same unworthily. Judge, therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord.' ”

How entirely the voice of the Church, as she speaks from her authorized standards, is one with the Word of God! In obedience, then, to her commands, as each communion season draws near, “Search and examine your own consciences, (and that not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with God; but so) that ye may come holy and clean to such a heavenly feast, in the marriage garment required by God in the holy Scripture, and be received as worthy partakers of that holy table.”

“Here would I feed upon the bread of God,  
Here drink with Thee the royal wine of heaven ;  
Here would I lay aside each earthly load,  
Here taste afresh the calm of sins forgiven.

“Too soon we rise : the symbols disappear ;  
The feast, though not the love, is past and gone.  
The bread and wine remove : but Thou art here,  
Nearer than ever—still my Shield and Sun.”

He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## THURSDAY BEFORE EASTER

NOON.

"In remembrance of Me."—*Epistle.*



OUR Blessed Lord had gathered His disciples together in that "upper room" for the last time. All their hearts were heavy at His words, for He spoke of the coming separation and of His approaching sufferings and death. It was on this occasion that He instituted the simple feast which we love to call "the Lord's Supper," and which He directed should continue until His coming again, as a pledge of His dying love for His people. It is no empty form, no superstitious ceremony, no mysterious transformation, but a simple rite to be participated in by every one to whom the memory of Christ is precious, as his crucified Redeemer. It is a double pledge. The communicant not only acknowledges his sense of Christ's love to his soul, but also testifies, in his reception of this holy sacrament, his devotion to that precious Saviour, and renewedly dedicates himself to His love and service. How dear are those mutual pledges between Christ and the soul, every earnest communicant knows from blessed experience; and he prizes, as one of the most valued privileges of the

Church the frequent opportunities which she affords her children thus to remember Jesus.

None need fear to approach His holy table who love the Lord Jesus Christ. The power of sin may be very strong, much corruption may yet dwell in the heart, the burden of guilt may be "intolerable." But it is for just such as these, who feel themselves to be miserable sinners, that the feast is spread. "If, therefore, you love God and your neighbor, though not so fervently as you could wish; if you have a real desire of being better than at present you find yourself to be; if the fruits of the Holy Spirit, though in a very low degree, do appear in your life; lastly, if you do daily pray for God's grace, that you may in His good time be what He would have you to be; and do not live in any known sin; by no means forbear to go to this ordinance as often as you have an opportunity; and depend upon God's blessing and an increase of His graces."

"According to Thy gracious word,  
In meek humility,  
This will I do, my dying Lord,  
I will remember Thee.

"Thy body, broken for my sake,  
My bread from heaven shall be;  
Thy testamental cup I take,  
And thus remember Thee."

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## THURSDAY BEFORE EASTER.

EVENING.

"Lord, remember me."—*Gospel.*



SOME one has remarked, that one instance of conversion in a dying hour has been recorded, that none need despair; and *but* one, that none need presume. How slight is the encouragement offered by this narrative, to one who has lived an impenitent life amid all the influences of the Gospel, we may learn by considering a few points in this man's history. He was a heathen, born and educated among all the polluting influences of idolatry. It is very possible, either that he had never heard of Christ until he was called to mingle in the scenes of the crucifixion, or that he had considered Him only a religious fanatic, who, like many others at that time, appeared in Judea, falsely claiming to be a prophet sent from God. He and Jesus met as companions in a disgraceful death, which was visited upon both by the condemnation of the Roman law. That amid all this humiliation and disgrace, this reviling and execration of His enemies, this malefactor's guise, the dying thief could recognize a Saviour, could trust his soul into His keeping, and acknow-

ledge as his King, before the hooting rabble and the mocking priests, Him who, as a criminal, hung beside him on the shameful cross, marks a degree of faith and a power of spiritual discernment almost inconceivable. We can not wonder that Jesus honored such a faith, and rewarded it with the assurance of a blissful immortality.

Are any building upon the dying thief's experience excuses for delaying present repentance and obedience? Oh! beware lest, when the storms and billows of death rise over you, you find that your foundation is on the sand, and the first waves bring ruin to your guilty souls! Follow the dying thief's example in this respect. As it was, in all probability, his *first* opportunity of salvation, which, embraced, made him the joyful companion of Christ in Paradise; see to it, that you also yield to the *first* call of God's Holy Spirit; and thereby secure for yourself the same blessed inheritance.

“Where'er Thou roamest, one happy soul, we know,  
Seen at Thy side in woe,  
Waits on Thy triumph—even as all the blest  
With him and Thee shall rest.  
Each on his cross, by Thee we hang awhile,  
Watching Thy patient smile,  
Till we have learned to say, ‘’Tis justly done;  
Only in glory, Lord, Thy sinful servant own.’”




"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## GOOD FRIDAY.

MORNING.

"Fetch them home, blessed Lord."—*Collect.*

T is the cry of the Church, as she takes her stand beneath the Cross. The Son of God offers Himself to-day as the world's ransom. Shall one drop of that precious blood be shed in vain? Shall one soul for whom Christ died perish without even hearing of the price that was paid for its redemption? O blessed Lord! "fetch them home," from the north, from the south, from the east, from the west, "Jews, Turks, infidels and heretics," bring them "to Thy flock, that they may be saved."

Christ is "not willing that any should perish," but "will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." He has, by the sacrifice of Himself, provided a way by which even the guiltiest may obtain mercy. He taught this glorious gospel of the grace of God while He was on earth, and at His death committed it to His disciples, to publish through all the world to "every creature." Yet a large proportion of mankind at the present day have never heard of Jesus. Thousands are daily going down to the grave in utter despair.

How is this? The Church *prays*, "Fetch them home;" but what is she *doing* to bring them home? Yet the Church is composed of individuals; and at their door lies the sin. What are *you* doing, O Christian! to bring lost souls to Jesus?

When you enter God's house to-day, to commemorate Christ's dying love; when, upon bended knee, you follow your pastor as he prays, "Fetch them home, blessed Lord," put the solemn, searching questions to your soul: What have I done? what am I doing to bring the precious truth which this day recalls to the knowledge of a single soul? If conscience accuses you of unfaithfulness in the past, rise not from your knees until you have solemnly vowed to have pity on these souls for whom Christ died; lest the crime of blood-guiltiness cling to your skirts, and God hold you responsible for your brother's blood.

"Hark! what mean those lamentations,  
Rolling sadly through the sky?  
'Tis the cry of heathen nations,  
Come and help us, or we die!

"Hear the heathen's sad complaining—  
Christians, hear their dying cry;  
And, the love of Christ constraining,  
Join to help them ere they die!"

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## GOOD FRIDAY.

NOON.

"Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God."—*Epistle.*



HE murderers of our Lord have had their way. The dreadful deed is done. Faint, agonizing, dying, the Son of God hangs on the cursed tree. On His brow the death-dew mingles with the bloody drops caused by the crown of thorns. His back is furrowed by the scourging. His lips are parched with thirst. His hands and feet, which ever moved in blessing to mankind, are pierced by the cruel nails that torture but do not kill. Beneath His cross, His executioners are dividing the spoils, and watching for His death, while the gaping crowd insult Him with revilings; and the scribes and elders with their mocking gibes.

But now the scene is changed. Portentous darkness covers all the land. The vail of the temple is rent in twain. The very dead arise from their graves and appear to the terrified blasphemers. But over the soul of Jesus comes a deeper darkness than that occasioned by the absence of the sun. None can know the agony of spirit which the Son of God endured through these three long hours,

when to all His former pangs was added the withdrawal of His Father's countenance. We dare not attempt to penetrate into the awful mysteries that transpired during those hours of darkness. We can only prostrate ourselves at His feet, to wonder and adore.

Yet that meek sufferer hung suspended on the cross, to do His Father's will in the procurement of our salvation. It was the mission of His life. "Lo, I come," was His prophetic announcement, while yet long ages intervened before its accomplishment. Again and again did He declare to His disciples this grand purpose of His life. In the strong agony of Gethsemane, He meekly drank the cup to its bitter dregs, exclaiming, "Not my will, but thine, be done." And now, on Calvary, He bows His head to the divine decree, and dies, the innocent for the guilty, that this day might be a *Good Friday* to every sin-stained soul.

"Bound upon the accursed tree,  
Faint and bleeding, who is He?  
By the eyes so pale and dim,  
Streaming blood, and writhing limb;  
By the flesh, with scourges torn;  
By the crown of twisted thorn;  
By the baffled, burning thirst;  
By the drooping, death-dewed brow--  
Son of Man! 'tis Thou! 'tis Thou!"

"He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.

## GOOD FRIDAY.

EVENING.

"It is finished."—*Gospel.*



**W**HAT a retrospection was that, in which the dying Saviour, from His cross, gazed through the long vista of the past, and saw every type and prophecy now fulfilled! The world's redemption was accomplished. The mighty gulf which had separated earth and heaven was now filled up. The wall of partition between God and the soul was broken down. The way was prepared, the ransom paid, the atonement offered, the sacrifice completed. Nothing was left for man to do but to accept the great mercy thus freely purchased for him by the infinite sufferings of the Son of God. It was an hour of great joy. He who had come to earth to do His Father's will, could now exclaim, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Into the future, also, turned that omniscient gaze. He saw the constantly increasing procession of the redeemed hastening on to join in the "new song," and "the travail of his soul" was "satisfied."

We, too, must come to that hour when life, with all its duties, its joys, its responsibilities, is slipping

away from us, and the soul stands midway between time and eternity. We look upon the past; but not as Christ, upon a life unstained by a single sin, a work completely finished in all its parts.

How much in that hour will there be to regret! How sad will then be the confession: "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us." But, blessed be God, the outlook into the future, for a believer in Christ, is one of inexpressible happiness. He trusts himself into those arms which were once nailed to the cross for him, with the blissful assurance that they will bear him safely over the river of death, into eternal life and blessedness beyond. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

" 'Tis finished! the Messiah dies—  
Cut off for sins, but not His own;  
Accomplished is the sacrifice—  
The great redeeming work is done!

"Death, hell, and sin are now subdued;  
All grace is now to sinners given;  
And lo! I plead the atoning blood,  
And in Thy right I claim my heaven."

" He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me "

## EASTER EVEN.

### MORNING.

" We are baptized into the death of Thy blessed Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ."—*Collect.*



WHEN the mortal agony is over, and the soul has winged its flight to the throne of God, naught remains to the weeping friends but the pale, cold corpse. It sees them not; it heeds them not. The endearments of love, the sobs of agony, call forth no answering sign. The rush of the outer world, which was wont to quicken to feverish excitement that lifeless form, and spur it on to ceaseless activity in the rounds of business or pleasure, now passes on unnoticed. The man is dead.

So when we become "dead with Christ," by the power and grace of God, a change as great, as real, passes over the soul. We are "dead to sin;" as free from its power, as indifferent to its pleasures, as uninfluenced by its seductions, as is the pale corpse in its coffin to the pleasures, the pursuits, the ambitions of life.

But sin does not die in a day. "Our old man is crucified with Him," says the Apostle; perhaps referring not more to the peculiar mode of Christ's

death, than to the slow and painful *nature* of crucifixion. So, when the soul dies to sin, it is a life-long dying—a struggle which only terminates when this leprous body is returned to corruption. It would seem as though nothing but a total dissolution of its every part could remove the defilements of sin contracted by our mortal nature.

But what is the prospect of those who know nothing of this baptism into Christ's death; whose lives are spent in the gratification of unhallowed desires, the pursuits of worldly ambitions, the feasting and pampering, instead of the crucifying of "the old man"? Only those who "have been planted together in the likeness of His death" can indulge any safe hope of partaking also "in the likeness of His resurrection." Let us see to it, then, that we are "buried" with Christ, by ceasing from the practice and love of sin, and by walking in the newness of a holy life.

"'Tis not the skirmish of an hour ;

Sin yields not at a blow ;

For pride of heart is ill to slay ;

And what seems overcome to-day,

Will be to-morrow's foe."



He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."

## EASTER EVEN.

NOON.

"Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God."—*Epistle.*



SACRAMENTS and ordinances, when blessed of God and received in living faith, are channels of grace to the soul of the recipient; but otherwise, they are as barren of blessing as a painted sun is of light and heat. The waters of Jordan, under the blessing of Jehovah, brought health to the leprous body of Naaman; but Gehazi might have bathed therein seventy times seven, and yet his foul disease have remained unchanged.

Often does the heart of the Christian grow sick when he looks round upon the Church of God and sees multitudes resting their hope for eternity upon a mere profession of Christianity. Oh! how miserably are such deceiving themselves, if the Word of God be true, and what stumbling-blocks are they proving in the way of others! Many there are who have observed this Lenten season, in all its external appointments, with commendable regularity; yet they have said in their hearts, "What a weariness is it!" and they are now secretly rejoicing that the return to their pleasures is so near at hand.

How is it with you, dear reader? How do you regard this season's approach and departure? If it is to you merely a period of unwilling restraint; of punctilious performance of distasteful duties; of putting away for a time the "filth of the flesh," only that you may plunge into it with more zest when Lent has departed, oh! beware lest, having no "answer of a good conscience toward God," you find that these precious opportunities for growth in grace prove but additional condemnation to your soul. But if you value this season as the most precious in the whole year, because it brings your soul nearer to God, and quickens you into new spiritual life, then rejoice in the assurance, not only that "the filth of the flesh" is purged away, but that you have the "answer of a good conscience toward God."

"Oh! that the Lord would guide my ways  
To keep His statutes still;  
Oh! that my God would grant me grace  
To know and do His will.

"Order my footsteps by Thy word,  
And make my heart sincere;  
Let sin have no dominion, Lord!  
But keep my conscience clear."

He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.

## EASTER EVEN.

### EVENING.

"They went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."—*Gospel*.



HERE is a feeling of inexpressible relief as we contemplate Christ in the tomb. The long agony is past; His sufferings forever ended. Though it was a sad and bitter hour to the little band who mourned their Master dead, and despairingly talked over the destruction of all their once bright hopes; yet to every Christian heart, Easter Even is now so illumined by the refulgent rays of the coming morn, that we can scarcely sympathize with the timid disciples, in the gloomy fears which at this time filled their hearts.

But we too often resemble those desponding disciples, when the shadow of death falls upon our households. Blessed be God! to the Christian, death is *only* a shadow. Yet we allow it to cover us with gloom. We weep as those who have no hope. We part with the loved ones as though we had no expectation of ever meeting them again. Cheer up, despairing heart! Whether in the prospect of your own death, or in that of the dearly loved, remember that Jesus has died, and thus deprived death of its sting, the grave of its victory.

The enemies of Jesus "make the sepulchre *sure*, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."

Yet how utterly vain are all their precautions before the power of a risen Jesus! So shall it be with every soul that sleeps in Jesus. When the archangel's trump shall sound to call Christ's people to Himself, the ears long dull in death shall hear the summons, and the reanimated forms spring forth to meet their Lord. Nor seal, nor stone, nor all the hosts of hell, shall have the power to keep a single believer from Jesus' arms.

When we have done and suffered all the will of Jesus here, and the hour that must come to all draws nigh to us, may that peaceful sleep, that glorious resurrection, be the blessed portion of both reader and writer!

"Alleluia, Alleluia!

The battle now is done,

The victory is won;

Let us joy and sing,

Alleluia!

"Alleluia, Alleluia!

Jesus, by Thy wounds, save

Us from the endless grave,

That we may live and sing,

Alleluia!"

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